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President: Mr. Al-Nasser. . . . . (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Cancela (Uruguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 31 and 111

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/66/675)

Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/66/659)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda, former Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): On behalf of the members of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), I am pleased to introduce the report of the Commission on its fifth session (A/66/675). Supporting countries emerging from conflict on the path towards sustainable peace and development continued to be at the core of the Commission's work in 2011. During the reporting period, the Commission responded to the request for advice and support from the Republic of Guinea, which became the sixth country to be placed on the PBC's agenda. It was the first time that such a request has been submitted directly to the Commission by the Government concerned.

Guinea is also the first country to be placed on the agenda in the absence of a mandate for a full-fledged peacekeeping or special political mission. The decision taken by the Commission to respond positively to Guinea's request for advice therefore marked a new phase in the evolution of the PBC, one of engaging with a country at a crucial political and socio-economic transition phase. Guinea also poses a significant challenge to the United Nations system, namely, whether it will be able to recalibrate its presence in the country from the traditional humanitarian and development modus operandi to one that is able to respond to the complex and integrated nature of peacebuilding support.

Only last week, the PBC undertook its first field visit to the country to assess the progress made in the implementation of the statement of mutual commitments adopted in September 2011 in the presence of President Alpha Condé.

In Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, the PBC has adapted its engagement to critical processes and emerging priorities as those countries undertake additional steps towards peace consolidation. In Liberia, the PBC, the Government of Liberia and its regional and international partners began the implementation of the statement of mutual commitments and completed the first review of the progress made in meeting those commitments. Generally, the Commission structured its support to these countries around three main tasks, namely, political support and advocacy, resource mobilization and fostering coherence.

The reporting period witnessed initial steps taken by the Commission to respond to resolution 65/7, of 29 October 2010, concerning the outcome of the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture

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(A/64/868, annex), or what is otherwise known as the 2010 review. At the beginning of 2011, the Commission adopted the road map for actions, which represented an implementation framework to take forward relevant recommendations emanating from the review, with special emphasis on enhancing the Commission's impact in the field, addressing key priorities for the countries on the PBC agenda and enhancing partnerships with relevant United Nations and non-United Nations actors. The report before the General Assembly today contains a dedicated section describing the progress achieved in the implementation of relevant recommendations from the 2010 review.

Having provided this brief overview, allow me to highlight only a few points from the report that deserve particular attention from the General Assembly. First, the report underscores the activities undertaken by the Commission's various configurations to reach out to, and engage with, a number of critical actors within and outside the United Nations. A significant step in that direction was taken by the PBC Chairs' Group when it paid its first ever visit to the African Development Bank (AfDB) in Tunis, in November 2011. A key objective of the visit was to explore potential avenues for partnerships in the context of the Commission's resource mobilization and of improving coherence.

Deepened collaboration between the Commission and the AfDB has now resulted in much better clarity on concrete areas where both institutions could jointly work to support peacebuilding priorities in the African countries on the Commission's agenda. Those include resource mobilization and advocacy, policy dialogue on critical peacebuilding issues, joint work on youth employment in the countries on the PBC's agenda and possible complementarity with the activities of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Subsequently, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the AfDB developed a workplan to take forward each of those areas of collaboration in practical terms. It is a promising partnership for the PBC and the countries on its agenda, as it will enable the Commission and the PBF to play their respective catalytic roles in longer-term and targeted support to national peacebuilding efforts.

Secondly, the report refers to yet another crucial step taken by the Commission to fulfil its mandate in developing best practices in peacebuilding, by demonstrating its potential as a unique platform for knowledge and experience-sharing among the countries on its agenda and among those countries and other countries that have undergone similar experiences in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction.

To that end, on 8 and 9 November 2011, the Government of Rwanda — my Government — together with the PBC and in collaboration with the African Development Bank organized a high-level meeting, held in Kigali, on post-conflict peacebuilding and the experience of Rwanda. The meeting brought together the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, the Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire and other high-level dignitaries from the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Timor-Leste and South Sudan, as well as senior officials from the African Union and the World Bank and members of the PBC Chairs' Group and the PBSO.

The event was an opportunity for frank and focused discussion on critical peacebuilding challenges, such as inclusive ownership and leadership; innovative approaches to nation-building and socio-economic development; and the strategic use of aid. The PBSO and the African Development Bank are in consultations with the World Bank and the United Nations civilian capacity review team to explore practical steps to take forward the outcome of the Kigali high-level meeting. There is a real need to nurture that type of cooperation in the area of peacebuilding among the countries of the South. The Peacebuilding Commission is best suited to become that type of political platform for cooperation, which could be considered further down the line as one of various ways of engaging countries seeking the Commission's advice.

Thirdly, while the Commission continues to pursue actions focused on enhancing its impact in the field, expanding its outreach and partnerships and exploring its unique role as a knowledge- and experience-sharing platform, the report highlights efforts aimed at strengthening the Commission's relationship with key actors at Headquarters, namely, the principal organs of the United Nations and lead operational entities.

However, there is certainly much room for deepening and diversifying those relationships. In that regard, it is crucial that the general membership consider ways to invest time and effort to engage in the activities and work of the PBC and draw on its tremendous potential to become a bridging mechanism between security and socio-economic development actors.

The unique membership structure of the Commission, drawn from the membership of the three

principal organs and from top financial contributors and troop-contributing countries, has yet to be fully utilized for the benefit of a more coherent and dynamic response to post-conflict situations. In the light of the complex nature of peacebuilding, which involves multiple security, political and development actors, and in view of current pressure on financial resources, policies encouraging a whole-of-government approach and United Nations system-wide coherence are becoming more urgent today than ever before. I call on the Assembly to reflect on its role in support of the cause of peacebuilding by contributing to policy development in those two crucial areas.

The most serious test that the United Nations faces collectively is how to muster the political will to develop adequate structures and policies that will ensure that it remains relevant in the evolving global security and socio-economic development realities of our times. The new United Nations peacebuilding architecture, made up of the PBC, the PBF and the PBSO, could lead system-wide efforts in that regard. However, that can only materialize if the membership becomes more actively engaged in the work of the PBC, contributes to the PBF and supports the PBSO in its convening role within the wider United Nations system.

I hope that today's debate will take us a step further towards realizing the full potential of the new architecture to deliver on the promises to respond to the needs of millions of people in countries emerging from conflict.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh, Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): Through you, Sir, I wish to thank Ambassador Eugène-Richard Gasana of Rwanda for his leadership and outstanding work in steering the work of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2011. His introduction of the report of the Commission on its fifth session (A/66/675) bears witness to the efforts that he and the members of the Commission Chairs' Group exerted during the reporting period in order for the Commission to meet the growing expectations placed upon it with respect to its central role in the United Nations system and its contribution to post-conflict peacebuilding. I am therefore deeply honoured by and grateful for the confidence vested in me and my country by the Commission's membership to lead and manage the challenging tasks of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2012.

Bangladesh has been a member of the Commission since its inception, in 2006. We are fully cognizant of the fact that the Commission is uniquely placed to become a viable political platform for global and country-specific engagement in support of national peacebuilding efforts and to help achieve solid and irreversible gains on the path to sustainable peace and stability for the people and societies affected by conflicts.

I cannot agree more with the immediate past PBC Chairperson's emphasis on the need for the general membership to invest time and effort in the activities and work of the Commission and to draw on the tremendous potential of that United Nations body for integrating the imperatives of security and socio-economic development in post-conflict settings. In the year ahead, I look forward to a more solid, transparent, engaging and dynamic relationship among the Commission and the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Peacebuilding is a state of mind, a continuous process and a culture in policymaking, planning, funding and implementing of activities on the ground in post-conflict settings. In just under six years, the Commission, with valuable support from the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office, has made important strides in promoting a qualitative shift in the way that the international community responds to post-conflict situations.

The initiative taken by the Security Council that led to the 2009 report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict (A/63/881) testifies to the initial success of the new United Nations peacebuilding architecture in highlighting the urgency of that shift. However, much remains to be accomplished in order to take that architecture to the next level, ensuring that good intentions are translated into reality and that there are adequate and predictable resources available, as well as real focus on national capacity-building and the gender dimension and achieving improved coherence among key actors in the field. In that regard, I wish to underscore a few points in the context of the Assembly's consideration of the Commission's report on its fifth session.

First, the Commission's approach to its core mandates, structures, forms of engagement and working methods continues to evolve. The 2010 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture provided helpful recommendations in that regard, with emphasis on the need to enhance the Commission's impact at the country level. Under the leadership of my immediate predecessor, the Commission charted a clear path, drafting a road map to take forward the implementation of those recommendations. I pledge to intensify, in the year ahead, efforts towards encouraging the membership of the Commission to own the implementation process through the recently adopted road map for actions, with an emphasis on making tangible impact on the ground. In that context, we need to encourage the countries on the agenda and in the broader membership to reflect on what they expect the PBC to deliver and, consequently, what tools and resources the Commission should have to meet those expectations. Today's debate represents an excellent opportunity for that purpose, and we shall greatly benefit from concrete ideas and proposals to that end.

Secondly, United Nations operational entities, the World Bank, regional organizations and development banks, and civil society and local leadership are all critical actors in the overall global response to the complex challenges of security and socio-economic development in post-conflict countries. Experience shows that incoherence and a fragmented approach deflect the necessary focus on critical peacebuilding priorities, result in serious programmatic inefficiencies and divert resources to often redundant or unnecessary activities.

In that regard, the PBC will continue to pursue active partnerships with all relevant stakeholders and provide a platform where a more coherent approach to peacebuilding can take shape. In that context, should we strive to strengthen and activate the linkage between the PBC and the field? Should we do so through dynamic and clear relationships with key United Nations operational entities and senior-level United Nations representatives, by encouraging ownership of the PBC's process by enabling its members to retain diplomatic presence in the countries on its agenda or through considering the merits of an expanded use of the existing Joint Steering Committees that were established to consider and monitor PBF project implementation acting as the Commission?

Thirdly, and closely related to the previous point on coherence, the PBC will continue to explore complimentarily with ongoing processes addressing peacebuilding needs in post-conflict countries. Members may agree that the international community should be able to harmonize multiple global initiatives in the context of clarifying the comparative advantages of relevant actors in the field, agreeing on a rational division of roles and responsibilities among bilateral and multilateral actors and ensuring that much needed human and financial resources are most efficiently channelled to support national capacities and institutions.

In conclusion, we should utilize this debate to reinvigorate our commitment and rededicate ourselves, as Members of the United Nations, to ensuring that the Peacebuilding Commission, Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Support Office are empowered to serve the interests, mandated goals and objectives and the aspirations of countries emerging from conflict. Members of the General Assembly will agree with me that the broader membership represented by the Assembly has a central role and responsibility in that context.

Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement in this joint debate on the annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/66/675) and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/66/659).

I would like to thank the President for organizing this important meeting, as well as to thank the Ambassador of Rwanda for his statement as the former Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). I take this opportunity to again thank him for all his efforts throughout his chairmanship of the PBC. I also thank the current Chairperson of the PBC, the Ambassador of Bangladesh, for his statement.

The Non-Aligned Movement notes with appreciation that the annual report of the Commission reflects the progress made in taking forward the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the co-facilitators on the review process (A/64/868, annex). In that regard, the Movement reiterates that the report could also reflect activities undertaken by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) to sharpen its analytical capacity for prioritizing critical peacebuilding activities and to provide the PBC with for possible future courses of action aimed at establishing

sustainable peace in post-conflict countries, drawing on expertise from within and outside the United Nations. The report should also clarify the efforts of the PBSO to develop a communication strategy to help the Commission to communicate information about its work and objectives to a broader audience, at the country level and globally.

As mentioned in the report of PBC, the Commission would be an appropriate forum for taking forward a number of the recommendations contained in the report (see A/65/747) on the review of civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict. We believe that the review process should benefit from the expertise and experience gathered by the PBC over time. Priority should be given to national ownership as the core of all principles in reviewing civil capacities. That principle should not be included in a selective manner but, rather, should be inclusive. The mechanism should be developed in such a way as to include vulnerable groups, such as women and children. It should empower people at the grass-roots level to enable them to utilize their social bonds as strong collateral for development work and as effective deterrents against relapsing into conflict.

In relation to the section on country-specific configurations, the Movement has acknowledged the work undertaken by the Commission since it started its operations with the six countries on its agenda, as well as the progress achieved so far in the elaboration and implementation of strategic peacebuilding frameworks for those countries.

In the view of the Movement, an analysis of configuration activities aimed at promoting economic recovery and integrating the development dimension within the peacebuilding process should be sufficiently reflected, given the close relationship between peace and development. In that regard, the report could incorporate increased inputs from the views of Member States in order to increase harmonization between the strategic frameworks for peacebuilding in the countries on the Commission's agenda and their respective national development priorities.

The report should also place greater emphasis on the efforts of the PBC to develop a field-centred approach that guarantees well-coordinated and coherent actions on the ground and ensures faster and more predictable financing of recovery activities over the medium to long term. In that context, the report could clarify how the Commission has striven to maintain attention on peacebuilding issues.

In relation to the section on cross-configuration work, the report should provide greater detail on potential areas of synergy among the various configurations, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission.

With respect to section III of the report, entitled "Taking forward relevant recommendations of the 2010 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture", the Movement would like to see sufficient consideration of the catalytic role of the Commission in entrenching the principle of national ownership and developing national capacities, with particular attention to vulnerable groups. In that regard, the potential contribution of women to the peace process hardly needs reiteration.

On a related issue, the report put forward some conclusions identifying such priorities as providing the Security Council with a high-quality analysis of the specific problems in the area of peacebuilding as well as greater synergies in relation to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The Movement reiterates that the priority areas could also include national ownership, South-South cooperation, trilateral cooperation, a strengthened role for the PBC, women's integration, the involvement of civil society and the private sector and adequate funding and resources.

Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund, the total contributions to the Fund significantly increased, from $31.3 million in 2010 to $66.73 million in 2011. We thank the Member States that have made that valuable contribution. We also thank the new donors to the Fund.We urge other Member States that are in a position to do so to contribute to the cause of establishing sustainable peace and security.

The PBF must continue to be used as a catalytic mechanism intended to provide support during the early stages in order to prevent a relapse into conflict. There is an urgent need for closer synergy between the PBC and PBF, through a strategic relationship, to ensure greater coherence and coordination between the two bodies and avoid duplication. In that regard, we reaffirm the roles of the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission in providing policy guidance in the use of the Fund in order to maximize its impact in the field and to further increase its impact

and improve its functioning, to make the Fund more efficient, transparent, flexible and to facilitate the disbursement of funds, particularly for quick-impact and emergency projects. We stress as well the need for establishing a mechanism to assess whether its resources are being allocated to the proper channels for peacebuilding activities.

The Movement acknowledges with appreciation the introduction of informal interaction between the Council, the Chairs of the country-specific configurations and representatives of the countries on the agenda when the mandate of the corresponding peacekeeping or political mission is being formulated. Despite those positive developments, further progress is still needed to promote the institutional relationship between the PBC and the main organs of the United Nations, namely, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Without prejudice to the functions and powers of the other principal organs of the United Nations in relation to post-conflict peacebuilding, the General Assembly must play the key role in the formulation and implementation of post-conflict peacebuilding activities. In that regard, we underline the central role of the PBC in providing the United Nations with policy guidance and strategies on those activities.

Finally, let me conclude by reiterating the Movement's assurances of constructive and meaningful engagement in all future peacebuilding activities.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding country Croatia, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia and Turkey, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Supporting countries emerging from conflict is a challenge that the international community cannot fail to address. The United Nations system, its peacebuilding architecture and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in particular have a pivotal role to play in this respect. That is why the European Union has shown strong commitment and has actively engaged in the PBC's work since its establishment, in 2005.

Two years ago, the PBC went through a thoughtful review and assessment of its performance, with very valuable support provided by the three co-facilitators. One of the messages from the review was very clear: either there is a clear recommitment to peacebuilding at the heart of the work of the United Nations or the PBC will settle into the limited role that has developed so far. Let me stress that the European Union favours the former path, and strongly recommends the swift implementation of several recommendations put forward by the review, especially those related to enhancing the PBC's relevance in the field and improving coordination at Headquarters.

The two annual reports (A/66/675 and A/66/659) before us today are both comprehensive documents illustrating some of the achievements. For instance, there has been progress in terms of outreach activities, better synergy between the PBC and the Peacebuilding Fund and greater interaction between the PBC and the Security Council.

The reports also show some positive developments as a result of the continued engagement of the country-specific configurations in support of the six countries on the PBC's agenda. The configurations have endeavoured to provide political guidance aimed at coherence among key players pursuing nationally owned peacebuilding priorities.

The placement of Guinea on the PBC's agenda in February 2011 and the progress witnessed thus far in that country on security sector reform (SSR) — the launch, along with the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), of a pension scheme for 4,000 military personnel — and on deployment of civilian expertise, such as the appointment of an adviser on SSR, are also positive steps. Still, great challenges ahead remain. The efforts to unleash the PBC's full potential to overcome those challenges need to continue. Important test cases include the 2012 elections in Sierra Leone, national reconciliation in Liberia and the SSR process in Guinea-Bissau.

Looking ahead, the EU welcomes the road map for actions in 2012 as a living document put forward by the former Chairperson of the PBC, Ambassador Gasana. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him warmly for his commitment during his term of office. It is now time to start implementing the road map with concrete initiatives and a greater sense of accountability. The complementarity between the work of the PBC and other initiatives, such as the civilian

capacity review and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, adopted at the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, the Republic of Korea, should also be ensured.

The EU looks forward to working hand in hand with the new Chairperson, Ambassador Abulkalam Abdul Momen, the membership of the PBC and the Peacebuilding Support Office to move this agenda forward. I want to congratulate the new Chairperson and wish him well in his term of office.

Let us not forget the most important aspect, namely, national ownership. Peacebuilding will only succeed if it is homegrown and nationally led. Our duty as the international community must consist of aligning with nationally owned strategies.

In conclusion, only a more relevant, more flexible, better performing, better supported, more ambitious and better understood PBC will be in a position to make a difference. The European Union stands ready to continue to support the efforts to enable the United Nations peacebuilding architecture to live up to the expectations that accompanied its establishment.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to take the opportunity of today's debate to express our great appreciation to the outgoing Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Eugène-Richard Gasana. We also wish every success to his successor, Ambassador Abulkalam Abdul Momen of Bangladesh.

Belgium agrees with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union. At the same time, I would like to make a few extra remarks in my national capacity and based on my experience as Chair of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The reports (A/66/675 and A/66/659) before us give us a complete overview of the substantive activities of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, including in the Central African Republic. Now we need to focus on the objectives for 2012. The road map for actions for 2012, drawn up as a living document, gives us a broad perspective of what the activities of the Commission will be. We need to identify a limited number of priorities for the next few months. In that context, I would like to focus on three points, namely, mobilizing resources, strengthening national ownership, and relationships with stakeholders on the ground.

With respect to mobilizing resources, the success of the configurations and of the Peacebuilding Commission overall depends to a large extent on their ability to mobilize resources for peacebuilding priorities. In that connection, I would like to emphasize the importance of developing targeted partnerships with regard to specific projects such as, for example, reintegrating populations affected by conflict and developing partnerships with traditional and non-traditional partners, including emerging countries and private foundations. We must also assist countries on the Commission's agenda to build their own capacity for mobilizing resources.

With regard to strengthening national ownership and capacity, too often the Governments of fragile countries and of countries in post-conflict situations do not have enough capacity to take over their own peacebuilding programmes. We need to find new ways to strengthen national capacities in order to avoid the risk that projects could falter once experts have left. In that context, the report of the Secretary-General on civilian capacities in the aftermath of conflict (see A/65/747) quite rightly highlights the importance of South-South cooperation as a promising avenue to explore. The Central African Republic configuration is now working with the Secretariat to identify such a partnership, preferably with French-speaking countries with similar legal systems.

Finally, with respect to strengthening relationships between the Peacebuilding Commission and its configurations with stakeholders on the ground, we see too often still a lack of communication between the configurations and United Nations missions that do not report directly from the Peacebuilding Support Office. In that regard, dialogue with national interlocutors and implementing peacebuilding priorities could both benefit from better direct communication between configurations and missions. We therefore encourage the Peacebuilding Support Office to intensify its dialogue with the other branches of the Secretariat on the matter.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the President for organizing today's debate on the annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/66/675). Before going into the substance of my remarks, I should like to follow the example of my Belgian colleague and thank the outgoing Chairperson

of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Gasana, for his excellent management. I should also like to congratulate Ambassador Momen of Bangladesh on his election as the new Chairperson.

I thank the Secretary-General for providing a comprehensive and well-written report (A/66/659). I hope that today's debate contributes to an exchange of our respective experiences in peacebuilding in order to further enhance the PBC's performance.

I am speaking today in my dual capacity as representative of Switzerland and as Chair of PBC's country-specific configuration for Burundi.

When I took office as Permanent Representative, almost two years ago, I also took over the role of Chair of the Burundi configuration, which had been held by my predecessor. I was not a professional in peacebuilding then and, while I have grown in experience in the past two years, I still consider myself to be somewhat of an amateur in the matter. The word amateur derives from the Latin verb "amare" — to love — and I can attest, based on my own experience, that it is difficult to assume a configuration chairmanship without love for the job and without a certain affection for the country and the population for which one works.

I am also aware that the PBC is a relatively new body, which remains under the scrutiny of the United Nations system and many Member States. The PBC has yet to prove itself and demonstrate its added value. Since there seem to be certain reservations with regard to the work of the PBC, it is tempting to define quantitative or qualitative criteria for measuring its success. However, we must come to realize that peacebuilding is above all a political process that can hardly be measured scientifically.

Based on my experience, I believe that the success of the exercise essentially depends on three factors. First, there must be a strong commitment on the part of the Government of the country under consideration. On that point I fully agree with what my Belgian colleague said just a moment ago. Good cooperation between the configuration and the various actors of the United Nations system in New York and in the field is the second factor. Thirdly, messages emanating from the Commission must be clear and consistent.

Only under those conditions can the Commission make a difference and create added value. The benefit for a country on the Commission's agenda is that the Commission serves as its advocate before the international community and the United Nations system. As smaller, fragile States run the risk of being forgotten or passed over in favour of more pressing economic or security matters, the PBC takes on an important role in maintaining the focus of international attention on them. In addition, the PBC provides a unique platform for an institutionalized political and economic dialogue with a country emerging from conflict.

In my opinion, the PBC also contributes to an unburdening of the United Nations, particularly as regards the Security Council. Knowing that the Commission is closely following a fragile country, the Council can focus on other more pressing situations. Given that the Security Council has more than 60 situations on its agenda, the value of that easing effect should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, it is my impression that the Security Council could do more to acknowledge the potential of the Commission.

That last point leads me to address a number of challenges that the PBC seems to be facing. As I just said, the relationship between the PBC and the Security Council should be improved. Admittedly, relations between the two bodies have intensified, mainly due to the fact that the Chairs of the configurations can brief the Council and because Council mandates refer to the work of the PBC.

However, the interaction between the Chair of a configuration and the Security Council could still be expanded. To give a concrete example, I greatly benefitted from the opportunity to share my impressions on Burundi with the Council at an informal briefing organized by the Brazilian presidency of the Security Council. A standing invitation to Chairs of country configurations to attend informal Council meetings would, on the one hand, be beneficial to the Council because it would receive more inclusive analyses, and, be useful to a Chair of a country configuration, on the other hand, because by participating in informal Council discussions on the situation in the respective country, the Chair would be better able to fulfil his or her role.

We must also consider how to better involve the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in the work of the PBC. The debate we are having today is certainly very useful, but for the rest of the year the interaction between the General Assembly and the Commission is virtually non-existent. The situation

is somewhat better with respect to the Economic and Social Council. Those two principal organs are among the founding institutions of the PBC and almost half of its members are from the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

Yet another dimension of improved outreach and partnership concerns the Bretton Woods institutions and regional financial institutions. Their relations with the PBC gain importance as peacebuilding in a fragile country moves into the realm of social and economic development. I believe that in recent years there has been a growing mutual understanding of their respective roles and of the interdependence between the PBC and international financial institutions in peacebuilding. That is clear from the World Bank's *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*. We should now implement its conclusions in the field.

A final issue of concern is how to engage all members of the configuration to share tasks more evenly. It is the collective weight and political support of the membership as a whole that gives power and voice to a configuration. Even though I sometimes cannot help feeling a little lonely in my role as Chair, I enjoy very professional support from my colleagues in the Peacebuilding Support Office — whom I take this opportunity to thank.

In the Burundi configuration, I created a steering group open to all members wishing to participate in a more active and sustained way in our peacebuilding efforts in Burundi. I want to thank the members of the group for their commitment, and I hope that others will follow their example.

Of course, there are many other points worth focusing on, for example the relationship between a configuration Chair and the United Nations office in the country. However, I prefer to use this opportunity to advocate on Burundi's behalf and to call for social and economic support for its people. I notice that unfortunately Burundi is not represented in the Hall today. I will briefly say what I have to say.

Burundi is at a crucial stage of its development towards lasting peace. Burundi has made much progress but still faces considerable political, institutional and economic challenges. To overcome them, it needs the support of the entire international community. Substantial financial support to the new Burundi Poverty Reduction Strategy would be a clear signal that we, the States Members of the United Nations, continue to help fellow States as they transition from a conflict-ridden past towards a politically and financially stable future. To do that would be to honour the adage that the strength of a community is measured by the well-being of its weakest members.

Mr. Zhukov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Peacebuilding support is one of the key factors in effective conflict resolution, in stabilizing post-conflict situations and in preventing crises from re-erupting. A great deal of work is being done by the United Nations through peacekeeping missions, through the Peacebuilding Support Office and through the country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

We are well aware that such work involves much complexity and requires the coordinated efforts of Member States, United Nations programmes and funds, regional organizations, the Secretariat and international financial institutions. However, we are still compelled to mention the somewhat fragmented nature of ill-coordinated peacebuilding support, the illogical division of labour among peacebuilding stakeholders and of gaps in financing mechanisms. Addressing those problems is impossible without the focused attention of Member States and systematizing peacebuilding process.

The Russian Federation supports the work of the PBC. In our view, its establishment brought significant added value to the Commissions's role in coordinating peacebuilding and providing advisory support to the Security Council concerning countries on its agenda. However, in spite of successes in recent years, much remains to be done to optimize and enhance the Commission's results in the field. Serious work is being done in the country-specific configurations, and we give the PBC much credit for establishing direct dialogue with national Governments in its leadership role in the peacebuilding process.

We must not allow the accumulated experience of configurations not to be fully utilized or to remain a bilateral dialogue between configurations and the countries on their agendas. Unfortunately, the PBC is still not succeeding in playing its central role as the main advisory and coordinating body for peacebuilding. We believe that the Organizational Committee of the PBC must focus on performing those functions, especially in places requiring the most post-conflict attention.

Under its mandate the Commission must also contribute to dealing with important cross-cutting issues involving peacebuilding and the larger United Nations system, which require a multifaceted discussion among Member States within United Nations agencies. One such issue is building civilian capabilities, bearing in mind the need to establish appropriate staff reserves from national rosters of civilian experts.

The Peacebuilding Fund is also an important component of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. That emergency financing mechanism, which provides long-term resources for reconstruction and development, is proving its effectiveness. Russia continues to contribute $2 million annually to the Fund. Providing aid through the Fund, on the basis of Government and United Nations programmes and projects, allows us to duly consider the priorities of the receiving country and to ensure responsible use of the assistance. We will continue to make a priority of the country-specific principle in the distribution of funds.

Mr. Shin Dong Ik (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation for the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) which, since its establishment pursuant to resolution 60/180 in 2005, has been steadily increasing its effectiveness in carrying out its mandate by catalyzing international efforts to assist countries emerging from conflict. The fifth annual report of the Commission (A/66/675) — which was prepared in close consultation with Member States and the Peacebuilding Support Office and adopted unanimously at a meeting of the Commission in January — provides a clear synopsis of the achievements and challenges faced by the Commission during its fifth session.

Moreover, it is indeed an important step ahead that the report for the first time reflects the progress made in accelerating the implementation of the relevant recommendations contained in the co-facilitators' report entitled "Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture"(A/64/868, annex).

During the period under review, we also welcomed the fact that the Organizational Committee elected Ms. Sylvie Lucas, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations, as Chair of the new country-specific configuration for Guinea.

I would also like to congratulate the Commission's Chairperson, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh Abulkalam Abdul Momen, on assuming his crucial and meaningful post this year. I am sure that substantial achievements will be made this year under Ambassador Momen's able stewardship.

Peacebuilding operations should be carried out in a way to further strengthen and respect the national ownership and priorities of recipient countries. The ultimate goal of peacebuilding is not only to stabilize a post-conflict situation, but also to establish a basis for long-term sustainable development, in which strengthening civilian capacity plays a vital role.

In that regard, resolution 66/255, entitled "Civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict", which was adopted on 16 March, is indeed a milestone in developing the idea and the goal of peacebuilding. It clearly states that the General Assembly encourages national Governments, the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations to broaden and deepen the pool of civilian expertise for peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict. That includes the expertise of countries with relevant experience in post-conflict peacebuilding or democratic transition, giving particular attention to mobilizing the capacities of developing countries and of women, in particular, as vital to the lasting success of United Nations peacebuilding endeavours.

The Assembly also requests the Secretary-General to continue holding regular consultations on the review of civilian capacities in order to maintain close collaboration with Member States, including through the Commission within its respective mandate. As a sponsor, the Republic of Korea strongly supports the resolution and appreciates the endeavours of Canada and Indonesia, which joined the initiative on the resolution.

The report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/66/659) rightfully states that the Fund is an increasingly successful instrument for supporting countries emerging from conflict. The report also concludes that a strong Peacebuilding Fund is a critical tool for the United Nations in assisting countries in their efforts to build lasting peace. With more resources, the United Nations will be better positioned to respond to emerging needs and opportunities. For example, countries seeking to implement the New Deal on International Engagement in Fragile States, announced at the fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, last November, merit increased support as

they seek to achieve the agreed State-building and peacebuilding goals. In that connection, I believe that the Commission is well placed to assume the role of linking countries that need the Fund with other bodies that can provide the assistance.

For our part, the Republic of Korea has made contributions of $4 million to the Fund since its establishment in 2005. The Republic of Korea will continue to make more contributions for the peace and stability of countries for specific peacebuilding interventions. For that purpose, my delegation looks forward to further discussion on ways to implement and improve the allocation of the Fund.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): It is my great pleasure to address the General Assembly at this debate on the report (A/66/675) of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/66/659) on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

I would like first of all to express our gratitude to Ambassador Eugène-Richard Gasana, former Chairperson of the PBC, for his leadership in compiling the in-depth report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its fifth session and for his able stewardship of the work of the PBC during the past year.

The report of the PBC covers well the activities undertaken by the Commission last year. The year 2011 coincided with the first year of implementation of the relevant recommendations emanating from the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (see A/64/868) in 2010, which eloquently highlighted both the potential and the challenges facing the Commission. The reporting period witnessed the initiation of critical actions to strengthen the impact and demonstrate the value added, both in the field and at Headquarters, through initiatives such as the establishment of a new cooperation partnership with the African Development Bank, the adoption of flexible and adaptable instruments of engagement to country-specific settings, and the exploration of practical approaches for resource mobilization.

With regard to the Working Group on Lessons Learned, which Japan had the honour to chair, the Working Group held four meetings last year on the following themes: resource mobilization for peacebuilding priorities and improved coordination among relevant actors; economic revitalization and youth employment; security sector reform and the rule of law; and the transition of the PBC's methods and instruments of engagement and the partnership between the PBC and the Security Council, with an emphasis on the need to generate more impact in the field. A number of interesting points were raised in the course of the discussions, which we attempted to capture by issuing documents on the initial findings. Such documents have been disseminated to a wider audience and presented for discussion by the Organizational Committee of the PBC, as the primary forum for policy development.

Needless to say, the positive momentum created by the 2010 review, and pursued in 2011, must be carried forward into 2012 for further consolidation. Japan, in its capacity as Chair of the Working Group on Lessons Learned for 2012, will continue to pursue the core priority areas addressed in the PBC's road map for 2012, such as resource mobilization and coordination among relevant actors and the strengthening of ties with the United Nations principal organs. That will be done in close cooperation with the Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Chairs of the country-specific configurations in order to build upon and push forward the discussions from last year and to generate more tangible results on the ground.

Turning to the report of the Peacebuilding Fund, it is encouraging that it provides a strong indication of the successful implementation of the Fund as a catalytic tool that addresses immediate critical gaps in the peacebuliding process before greater development assistance comes online.

The PBF's comparative advantages, such as its capacity to make quick decisions, its close collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission, and its flexibility to fill urgent needs where no funding mechanism is set up, should be highlighted. That will make the strategic positioning of the PBF clearer.

We note the efforts towards the improvement of management of the PBF, and look forward to further refinement of its administration, including by taking on board the recommendations from future discussions of the Peacebuilding Fund Advisory Group.

It should also be noted that the Fund largely achieved its allocation target of $100 million in 2011, consistent with its business plan. In order to help the PBF meet its financial needs and show our strong commitment to peacebuilding, Japan provided an additional contribution of $12.5 million to the PBF in 2011.

The PBC and the PBF, supported by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), will continue to be the central elements of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. Japan appreciates the continuous support provided by the PBSO. However, six years following its establishment, it is now time to realign ourselves from within to render the Commission more effective. The ownership of the Commission resides in the hands of Member States. Strong commitments and political support from us, as Member States, with the enhanced support of the PBSO, are essential in realizing the PBC's full potential.

As the Chair of the Working Group on Lessons Learned, Japan, in close cooperation with the Chairperson and the members of the PBC, remains strongly committed to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2012 and beyond.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ambassador Gasana for his introduction of the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its fifth session (A/66/675). We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) (A/66/659).

As the first agency of the United Nations system dedicated to coordinating post-conflict reconstruction, the PBC has carried out its work over the past year as mandated by the General Assembly and the Security Council. It has played an important role and made great progress in assisting peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict countries. China highly appreciates those efforts. However, we also note that peacebuilding in some countries remains an arduous task and the PBC faces many challenges.

In that context, I would like to raise the following points. First, the PBC and the relevant parties should fully respect the principle of national ownership in relation to the countries concerned. As post-conflict countries bear the primary responsibility for peacebuilding, the efforts of the PBC to help them must fully respect their wishes and assist them in strengthening capacity-building and governance. The PBC should also enhance partnerships with those countries in an active and constructive manner. In addition, an exit strategy must be formulated in order to achieve a smooth transition aimed at ensuring lasting peace and sustainable development.

Secondly, the PBC should identify priority areas, taking into account the specific situations of countries. In assisting countries in formulating peacebuilding and integrated development strategies, the PBC should consider the various situations of the countries concerned, enhance integrated coordination, fully respect their right to set priorities, focus on stabilizing the security situation, promote political reconciliation and accelerate democracy-building, while highly prioritizing the fundamental issues that threaten peace and security, especially social and economic development issues.

Thirdly, the PBC should enhance cooperation and coordination among United Nations agencies, international financial institutions and regional and subregional institutions. We hope that the PBC will further improve its institution-building capacities and its coordination with the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council as it seeks specific methods to help with post-conflict peacebuilding. At the same time, the PBC should further highlight the unique advantages of the World Bank, other financial institutions and regional and subregional institutions, such as the African Union, in order to ensure genuine progress in peacebuilding in the relevant countries.

Fourthly, the PBC should continue to improve the effectiveness of its working methods. Peacebuilding covers many fields and activities. The PBC should summarize those experiences and identify best practices. Its meetings should focus on work priorities in order to ensure quality. At the same time, it should direct its efforts to ensure the effectiveness of its work on the ground, including the full use of such resources as United Nations funds and programmes and peacekeeping operations in order to avoid duplication.

Fifthly, the PBF should increase its support for the peacebuilding efforts of post-conflict countries. China appreciates the positive role played by the Fund in peacebuilding and welcomes its efforts to enhance its own capacity-building and performance management, strengthen its communications with the PBC and maximize resource effectiveness. We call on more countries to contribute to the Fund. At the same time, we urge the international community to allocate greater financial resources to post-conflict peacebuilding and to mobilize increased funding sources.

China has continuously supported the work of the PBC and the PBF. We have participated actively in the work of the PBC and communicated with and exchanged views with all parties. In order to enable the PBC to play

a greater role in post-conflict peacebuilding, China will continue to contribute to United Nations peacebuilding efforts.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal): My delegation wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the President for organizing this important joint debate on the annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/66/675) and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/66/659). My delegation also wishes to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Eugène-Richard Gasana, Permanent Representative of Rwanda, for his excellent work as the outgoing Chairperson. I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Abdulkalam Abdul Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, on holding the chair this year. I am fully confident that he will carry out this onerous responsibility with great success.

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has steadily made considerable contributions to the countries on its agenda in their efforts in peace consolidation, as envisaged by the founding resolution. It is gratifying to know that the PBC has been gaining recognition among United Nations agencies and other development stakeholders as the dedicated intergovernmental mechanism aimed at enhancing the level of coordination, coherence and integration in post-conflict peacebuilding activities to ensure sustainable peace.

Countries emerging from conflict are in need of immediate and simultaneous attention in many areas, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, restoration of basic services, transitional justice mechanisms and building institutions necessary for public services and political leadership. The PBC has rightly understood these comprehensive and mutually reinforcing requirements have to be addressed in a prioritized manner through a single overarching planning document that contains nationally owned, nationally developed and well-defined peacebuilding elements. That single planning document is critically important to ensuring an enhanced level of coherence and coordination among different stakeholders working on the ground.

The crucial role of the PBC is obvious to all of us. It works to integrate economic revitalization with stabilization of the security situation in an effective manner. The PBC plays a very important role in sensitizing the global community about the specific challenges faced by post-conflict countries and helping to coordinate effective delivery on the ground. Nothing can replace the importance of national capacity and ownership in the peacebuilding process, no matter how fragile or difficult the situation.

The full effort of the international community should therefore be focused on building national capacity and promoting national ownership over the period. My delegation is confident that the statement of mutual commitments adopted by Liberia and Guinea as a new instrument for ensuring mutual accountability will be beneficial in accelerating work to ensure commitments and accountability.

My delegation expresses satisfaction that the PBC has made considerable efforts in coordinating peacebuilding activities among the United Nations system, the World Bank and the African Development Bank, aimed at effective delivery in the countries on its agenda. Although it has a long way to go, the PBC's interaction with the principal organs of the United Nations should be institutionalized to strengthen quality coherence at headquarters level. It is good practice that the PBC Chairpersons and the Chairs of the country-specific configurations have been invited to brief the Security Council and exchange views. That should be further institutionalized, along with intensification of the interactions aimed at better coordination and decision-making. Similarly, increased coordination with the Economic and Social Council would be highly appreciated.

The country configurations must be further bolstered and supported as an important, guaranteed platform for diverse stakeholders. They should be made into an effective vehicle through which international support can be realized to benefit the agenda country. At the same time, they can provide the agenda country with a wide avenue to reach the international community directly.

We support giving a due focus on the strengthening of civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict, because a more inclusive and coordinated approach to building civilian capacity will more effectively ensure the provision of necessary support to those countries. The Peacebuilding Fund has already proven its instrumentality in its rapid funding of much-needed peacebuilding activities in the early post-conflict transition period, when funding sources normally remain either largely unavailable or insufficient.

We hope that there will be synergy and an alignment between the PBC and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) whereby the Fund would buttress the PBC's goals and objectives by making available funds for critical projects and programmes, which would significantly contribute to the consolidation of peace in the immediate aftermath of conflict.

We agree with the PBF's approach of rapid-response funding and multi-year support, and we also support the idea that the countries on the agenda of the PBC deserve greater resources for the effective implementation of their nationally developed and owned peacebuilding strategies. It is hoped that the development of a three-year business plan for the period 2011-2013 and a performance management plan will help manage the Fund in an effective, efficient and results-oriented manner.

As the report indicates that more funds are required for 2013, my delegation sincerely urges the international community to contribute to the Fund. Contributing to the PBF is a smart investment. It reaps benefits in the form of sustained peace, stability and prosperity around the world.

Finally, Nepal is among the top troop-contributing countries and has been privileged to serve as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission since its inception. I myself had the opportunity to serve as the Chair of the Working Group on Lessons Learned in 2010. Nepal has not only served on the PBC, but has also benefited from peacebuilding funding. It is that context that we would like to express our continued commitment to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. Together we can make that intergovernmental body effective for the millions of people who are living in destitution owing to the devastating impacts of conflicts.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Like previous speakers, I wish to thank Ambassador Gasana for his tireless commitment at the helm of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2011, and I should like to wish every success to the new Chairperson, Ambassador Momen of Bangladesh.

Luxembourg fully associates itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

Seven years ago, the Peacebuilding Commission did not exist. To paraphrase Voltaire, it was necessary to invent it. Since the Commission's creation, its work has led to a deepening of our understanding of the concept of peacebuilding, including an increasing number of issues relating to post-conflict stabilization, the renegotiation of the social contract and the creation of the institutions that compose a working democracy, allowing citizens to reach their full potential.

Beyond peacebuilding, the Commission also considers State-building and the creation, thanks to the assistance of the PBC, of open societies. The inclusion of the Republic of Guinea on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda has also broadened its scope to include transitional situations other than post-conflict transition ones.

A little more than a year ago, I assumed the post of Chair of the Guinea configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, which had just been created at the request of the Government of the Republic of Guinea. The country was not emerging from armed conflict or from the aftermath of a natural disaster, yet everything had to be rebuilt. After more than five decades of authoritarian regimes, corruption had become institutionalized, the army was beyond civilian control and regularly preyed on the civilian population, and the country's human development indicators had hit rock bottom. What needed first and foremost to be rebuilt was trust between the citizens and the State, represented for too long by security and defence forces that abused their powers.

While this effort cannot succeed without strong political will on the part of the Government in question to take ownership of the peace- and State-building processes, the international community has a role to play in supporting it. However, political will and ownership by the Government by a country on the PBC's agenda must go hand in hand with political will and ownership by the member countries of the configuration. Once a country-specific configuration is no longer a simple forum for the exchange of information on the situation of a given country but becomes a true intergovernmental partnership, ready to throw the combined political weight of its members behind peacebuilding in that country, the Commission can fulfil its mission. It can then identify and promote synergies between the bilateral activities of individual Member States and work to ensure coordination and coherence in the context of support for the country in question.

I have just returned from a mission to Conakry with a delegation of members of the configuration, where I

was able to deepen the work of peacebuilding together with all governmental, State and non-State actors. That visit is part of the first periodic review of the statement of mutual commitments, adopted on 23 September last, which contains a considerable number of objectives aimed at finalizing the transition and allowing for the sustainable development of the country as well as reconciliation between the Guinean State and its citizens.

In that context, the Government and its partners have worked very hard over the last six months, particularly in reforming of the security sector, one of the three priorities of the configuration. Approximately 4,000 military personnel were retired on 1 January. The biometric census of the army, without which this initial retirement phase would not have been possible and an in-depth reform of the security forces could not take place, has also been finished.

General elections are to take place in 2012. Many actors see those elections as an important opportunity, including for advancing national reconciliation, provided that they are free, transparent and credible both politically and technically, and thus acceptable to and accepted by all.

In Guinea, as in other post-conflict countries, reconciliation can be achieved only by shining the light of truth on the past and ensuring justice for all victims. There can be no justice without a definitive end to impunity.

Peacebuilding in Guinea depends equally on dealing with the past and on preparing for the future. The third priority of the Guinea configuration is employment for young people and women. That means encouraging the pursuit of efforts aimed at the political, economic and social empowerment of women and fighting against all forms of discrimination and violence targeting them.

It is also necessary to support the efforts made by the Government to create conditions of stability leading to the creation of high-quality jobs, so as to reduce poverty and threats to social peace. The time has finally come to utilize the tremendous potential of Guinean youth, which represents more than 60 per cent of the population, and to transform it into a factor of stability and prosperity instead of one of instability and tension. That is a common challenge facing the subregion and the four West African countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda. A process of reflection and a strengthened regional approach would be appropriate in that regard.

Allow me to conclude with a few words on the organization of the work of the PBC and the role of its supporting structures. First, the Peacebuilding Support Office — and I would like to take this opportunity to commend the commitment and professionalism of its staff — should concentrate more on what could be considered its core business, namely, support for the Organizational Committee and the country-specific configurations, and, in general, for post-conflict countries, rather than seek to assume a policy research or normative role. The Office is not necessarily equipped to handle such roles in the right conditions.

In the same vein, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) should retain its nature as a catalyst and continue to focus on those countries that are on the PBC's agenda. The mid-term budgetary commitments to the Fund do not allow it to intervene everywhere. However opportune it may be to diversify the Fund's activities according to individual situations, particularly through Immediate Response Facility funding mechanisms, it is important to avoid excessive fragmentation of the $100 million per year that the Fund has at its disposal. Nonetheless, the PBF could play a useful role in steering post-conflict and peacebuilding efforts more effectively into frameworks to promote development, such as the poverty reduction strategy papers. That would also be in line with the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States endorsed by the Group of Seven Plus and their partners.

Despite its vulnerability to certain valid criticisms and despite its short tenure in the United Nations toolkit for international peace and security, the Peacebuilding Commission has begun to carve out a niche for itself in the Organization's institutional landscape. If the PBC succeeds in stirring the authorities and civil societies of the countries on its agenda to leadership, if all Member States of the PBC take ownership of its activities, and if it can count on the full cooperation of the main organs of the United Nations, on full human resources support from the PBSO and on critical funding from the PBF, the Peacebuilding Commission can certainly become a key player within the United Nations and foster lasting peace in the countries that call upon its services.

Luxembourg will continue to support the efforts of all partners to increase the concrete impact of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): I want to thank the President of the Assembly for convening this debate on the annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) (A/66/675) and the Secretary-General's report on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) (A/66/659). This is a valuable occasion for us to reflect on the work we undertook last year and on the challenges that lie ahead.

I take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Gasana for his leadership as Chairperson of the PBC in 2011. We also welcome the new Chairperson, Ambassador Momen, and pledge him our full support.

The PBC and the PBF made important strides last year to improve coordination in the United Nations system, to enhance their partnerships with external actors, and to better mobilize resources to countries emerging from conflict. There is still, however, space for further improvement in those and other areas. We hope that the annual report will not only account for our recent actions but also guide us in our future work.

As Chair of the Guinea-Bissau country-specific configuration, Brazil has been actively engaged with other Member States in considering ways to address the most pressing needs of post-conflict countries. Allow me to highlight four aspects that we believe should be seen as priorities in the current and future work of the PBC and the PBF. They are impact on the field, mobilization of resources, partnerships with external actors and relations with other United Nations bodies.

In 2011, both the PBC and the PBF strived to achieve concrete results on the ground. We are pleased to see that more effective instruments of engagement with host Governments are being developed and that the United Nations system has discussed ways to enhance coordination and avoid overlaps.

It is essential that we avoid creating cycles of reporting and mechanisms that will prove to be a new burden on the already stretched structures of local Governments. We should simplify our work as much as possible by developing a single peacebuilding strategy that will congregate all actors and clearly point out priority areas. We reiterate that an integrated approach that takes into account the development aspects of peacebuilding — such as economic revitalization, the restoration of basic services and youth employment — is vital to ensuring that post-conflict countries achieve long-lasting peace.

The mobilization of resources will continue to deserve our full attention. The PBC, as we know, provides a platform for advocacy on behalf of countries that are on its agenda. Without an effective mobilization of financial resources to implement our projects, our results may lag behind our objectives.

The case of Guinea-Bissau shows how relevant the financial support of the international community can be to peacebuilding. In the case of security sector reform, more specifically as regards the launching of the pension fund for the military, the financial engagement of the local Government must be complemented by the support of the international community, including regional actors. By playing a catalytic role, the PBF has been instrumental in moving forward this and other projects in Guinea-Bissau. The support provided by the PBF showcases the importance that it can have in kick-starting projects and generating a virtuous circle in countries that initially may face difficulties in marshaling financial resources.

Widening the pool of partnerships with external actors is vital to ensuring that the PBC and the PBF will continue to have a positive impact on the ground. Dialogue with international financial organizations and regional bodies should be fostered in order to help post-conflict countries attract much-needed financial and political support. We commend in particular the important role that African institutions have played. The African Development Bank and regional bodies, such as the Economic Community of West African States, have proved to be valuable partners of the PBC. We hope that those links will be strengthened.

It is also important for us to streamline our interaction with other United Nations organs. In 2011, as the report highlights, relevant steps were taken to promote a closer interaction with the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. We should continue to follow that path.

We hope that in 2012 the General Assembly will have more frequent exchanges of views on PBC activities. It is also important that the Security Council more often make use of advice from the PBC, since, as we know, the PBC has comparative advantages in providing a more holistic view of the challenges faced by countries emerging from conflict. Informal interactive dialogues and the participation of the Chairs of configurations in Security Council debates and consultations are useful tools to deepen the relationship. During its recent term

in the Security Council, Brazil actively upheld the need for a stronger dialogue between those two bodies and will continue to do so in the years to come.

Both the PBC and the PBF have established themselves as important parts of the United Nations and of its network of support for post-conflict countries. We expect that they will continue to develop meaningful work and have a growing positive impact on the field.

As Chair of the Guinea-Bissau country-specific configuration and a member of the Organizational Committee, Brazil will continue to be engaged in that process with a view to assisting post-conflict countries in attaining peace, stability and socio-economic development.

Mr. Khan (Indonesia): I would like to thank the President, for convening this joint meeting on the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its fifth session (A/66/675) and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) (A/66/659). I thank Ambassador Momen for introducing the PBC annual report. I also express my deep appreciation to the previous PBC Chairperson, Ambassador Gasana, along with the current and previous Chairs of the six country configurations and the working Group on Lessons Learned for their very valuable work.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned countries caucus in the PBC.

Confronted with multiple challenges, the countries emerging from conflict traverse a critical path that can lead to successful rebuilding and peace or relapse into instability and violence. Which path it is depends primarily on the quality of the nationally identified, owned and driven peacebuilding. But the quality, in large measure, is dependent also on the support of a vigorous and responsive global peacebuilding architecture.

Indonesia is therefore pleased that both the PBC and the PBF, in a relatively short span of time of time, have progressed capably and confirmed their vital status internationally. As reflected in the Commission's report, the Commission's increased focus on ground improvement in the six agenda countries and its comprehensive approach, not to mention its heightened efforts in outreach and advocacy to relevant stakeholders, have enhanced its impact at the country level.

While we should address any shortcomings in the implementation of the road map for actions in 2011, and identify opportunities through which the work of the PBC and PBF can be improved, we should all ensure that everything in our capacities is done to support the PBC and PBF in carrying their mandates.

In this context, Indonesia would like to highlight the following: first, national ownership remains critical and, to foster that, it is vital that the engagement framework and assistance of both the Commission and the Fund continue to be in consonance with the nationally identified needs and priorities by post-conflict countries.

Secondly, the experience of the PBC has provided highly valuable knowledge and insights, which should be drawn on further by the Security Council, as well as by the United Nations peacekeeping secretariat. Where synergy can be developed we should not be hesitant to draw on each other's comparative advantages.

Thirdly, the Commission should give its practical inputs actively on how the international system of harnessing and supporting civilian capacities should be strengthened. The ongoing United Nations system review of global capacities and resolution 66/255, adopted by consensus last Friday, offer the potential for Member States, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations and others to enable the bridging of civilian gaps in countries emerging from conflict in a more coordinated, demand-driven and responsive manner. Because most conflicts have occurred in developing countries, many of which have undertaken successful transitions, it is essential that civilian practitioners from the global South be utilized adequately.

To explore how regions with proven civilian capabilities, such as the Asia-Pacific region, can contribute to the United Nations review and partner to provide expertise, the first regional consultation on the subject was co-hosted by Indonesia and Norway in Bali at the beginning of this month. It yielded useful ideas and proposals that, we hope, will serve as important contributions.

Fourthly, we fully support the focus on resource mobilization and partnerships, as also contained in the PBC road map for actions in 2012. The outcome of the PBC task force on the role of the private sector in post-conflict peacebuilding, which Indonesia had the privilege of facilitating in 2008, gave some

very useful directions in partnering with traditional and non-traditional actors, such as philanthropic organizations. We hope that this aspect, stated in the 2012 road map, will be duly focused on and developed further tangibly.

My delegation notes with interest the various proposals for rapid-response financing in the independent review of the Senior Advisory Group on civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict (A/65/747), the importance of which was underscored by the Secretary-General in his follow-up report on civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict (A/66/311). We see strong merit in exploring if there is potential in replicating the World Food Programme's Working Capital Facility model for enabling quick and predictable financing in the United Nations system's post-conflict peacebuilding work. We also fully support taking the Commission's partnerships with the World Bank and the African Development Bank to a deeper level, which would enable new ways of channeling resources to critical peacebuilding priorities.

Lastly, Indonesia is pleased to note the enhanced impact of the Peacebuilding Fund through both the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility and the Immediate Response Facility. With its expanded assistance for 193 multifaceted projects in 22 countries, a deft management of the Fund is all the more important.

We welcome the Fund's designing of a performance management plan to guide joint steering committees of United Nations recipient agencies in planning and monitoring peacebuilding in an improved manner, while also noting the challenges mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

In the context of the work of both the Commission and the Fund, there is a need to have greater clarity in the relationship between the Special Representatives of Secretary-General, the resident country system and other United Nations agencies. There should also be more coherence between them and with other bilateral and multilateral partners.

In closing, Indonesia expresses its strong commitment to continuing to support the PBC and PBF and playing its role in contributing to even more strengthened responses by both.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): I thank the President for convening today's debate and for the opportunity to discuss the important reports that outline the progress of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) (A/66/659) and Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) (A/66/675).

Let me first turn to the Peacebuilding Fund. In recognition of the crucial gap that the PBF fills in the international response to conflict and in recognition of the Fund's positive trajectory, the United Kingdom will continue to be a strong friend and contributor to the Fund. The Secretary-General's report covers a period in which the PBF made notable progress towards achieving a number of critical reforms. In particular, we strongly welcome the progress that the PBF has made towards results-base programme design.

If the PBF is to have meaning, it must be able to deliver on-the-ground improvements for conflict affected communities and countries. The new business plan for 2011-2013 demonstrates a commitment to better monitoring and measuring the impact of the PBF's work. That will be extremely valuable. The United Kingdom encourages the increased use of independent reviews and evaluations, the selection of appropriate independent research indices, and the strong involvement of the Peacebuilding Support Office to ensure that we maintain an emphasis on designing and measuring effective programmes.

The United Kingdom notes that the mandate of the PBF requires it to be catalytic and strategic and to address gaps in peacebuilding. The United Kingdom welcomes the many and increasing instances in which the PBF has met those criteria. However, the proportion of activities independently assessed as significantly contributing to peacebuilding can be further increased. That can be done by greater use of conflict analysis, by working with already existing in-country systems for peacebuilding, and by building a shared global understanding of what catalytic peacebuilding is and applying it as a rigorous criterion to all future allocations of the Fund. The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office has already done some excellent work in that area, and we hope that that will continue. In that way, the PBF will be able to ensure that it achieves value for money.

I would like to turn now to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. Improving the PBC's impact in the field remains the most important priority. We need more progress on that. The PBC needs to use the combined political weight of its member States to fill gaps in international support for key peacebuilding

sectors in specific countries. It also needs to provide political backstopping and support to the United Nations team on the ground. It must not duplicate the efforts of the United Nations team.

In particular, we need clearer ways of judging what PBC configurations are actually achieving in-country. Developing a stronger culture of mutual accountability will help to strengthen the PBC's performance. Countries on the PBC's agenda need to live up to their commitments, but in return the PBC also needs to demonstrate to the countries on its agenda how it is delivering for them. Stronger accountability will deliver stronger results. We are pleased to see that an ambitious road map has been agreed for the Peacebuilding Commission in 2012. There is much to be done in one year, and we must all play our part in ensuring that agenda maintains pace.

In summary, we welcome the progress made by both the Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Commission during this period, and hope that with continued support from the Peacebuilding Support Office, that this progress can continue.

Mr. Nankervis (Australia): Australia speaks as a country committed to the work of peacebuilding, which is some of the most difficult, but most important that we can undertake, and to the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). I would like to take this opportunity to express Australia's appreciation for the work of the outgoing Chairperson of the PBC Organizational Committee, Ambassador Gasana of Rwanda, and express confidence in the stewardship of the incoming Chairperson, Ambassador Momen of Bangladesh.

This debate provides an important opportunity to take stock of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, including progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2012 review. I would like to touch briefly on three areas outlined in the PBC annual report (A/66/675) that are critical to the work of the Commission going forward.

The first is enhancing the impact of the PBC in the field. Its ultimate goal is to improve the lives of those in States emerging from conflict. Enhancing the impact in the field was one of the overarching themes of the 2010 review (A/64/868, annex) and is rightly an overarching objective of the Commission's road map for 2012. However, that objective can be easy to state but much more difficult to achieve.

Building better linkages with players in the field is an important part of the answer. The PBC must look at how it can best complement and support the work of United Nations missions and country teams, namely, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Executive Representatives of the Secretary-General and Resident Coordinators. The relationships between country-specific configurations and those actors need to be better clarified and strengthened.

We must look carefully at the PBC's comparative advantages. Those include its advocacy role and ability to convene a wide range of actors. The PBC needs to encourage more active engagement of multilateral and bilateral players in the field. In that spirit, Australia has deployed a peacebuilding adviser in Freetown to strengthen our peacebuilding engagement in Sierra Leone and Liberia and to enhance linkages between our interaction in New York and in the field.

While only one of the roles of the PBC, resource mobilization is a vital element of increasing the impact in the field. The new approach taken by the PBC and the PBF in Liberia in developing an expanded priority plan, linked to the statement of mutual commitments, is an important new development in that regard.

The second area that I would like to emphasize is supporting national ownership. That is, and should continue to be, the central principle defining the work and activities of the PBC in the countries on the agenda. We support efforts to better and more specifically define commitments between the PBC and agenda countries to make them more measurable and to align them more closely with national priorities.

We welcome efforts in New York to involve the Permanent Representatives of the countries on the agenda more deeply in the policy work of the PBC. We note that the recently adopted New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States gives us a blueprint for supporting national ownership, building mutual trust and achieving better peacebuilding results. Noting that three of the six New Deal pilot countries are on the PBC agenda, we look to the PBC and the PBF to take a leadership role in supporting the New Deal. Australia is proud to have established a new partnership arrangement with Timor-Leste to implement the New Deal. We encourage other countries to develop similar partnerships.

Thirdly, I would like to emphasize the important role of the PBC as a platform for sharing knowledge and experience. We note the innovation of the High-level

Meeting on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: the experience of Rwanda, held in Kigali in November.

Australia has consistently endeavoured to draw on experiences from our own Asia-Pacific region in our engagement with the PBC. In an attempt to consolidate and better share lessons learned, Australia is working with our partners on a publication on experiences in peace operations and peacebuilding in Solomon Islands, the autonomous region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste.

I will turn briefly to the Peacebuilding Fund. Australia recognizes the need to provide flexible and timely funding assistance for peacebuilding, and we support the PBF because it does just that. Australia was the first donor to commit to the Fund when it was established. Last November, we were pleased to double our annual assistance to $4 million for 2011-2012.

We commend the steps taken to continuously improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the PBF. We are particularly heartened by increased attention to the role of women in peacebuilding activities through the gender promotion initiative, and by the steps to strengthen monitoring and evaluation functions so lessons can be captured and applied to current and future programmes. We are examining options to provide additional staffing support to the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that area. In short, we believe that the PBF is helping to ensure that peacebuilding is not just an abstract concept, but a reality.

In conclusion, I would like to affirm Australia's commitment to supporting the PBC and the PBF to deliver tangible and lasting change to the lives of those in countries emerging from conflict. That is the ultimate goal by which their work should and will be measured.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): I would like to thank the President for organizing this joint debate on the progress made in taking forward the relevant recommendations in the report of the co-facilitators on the United Nations peacebuilding architecture of 2010 (A/64/868, annex), contained in the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its fifth session (A/66/675), as well as on the activities of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) from 1 July 2010 to 31 December 2011 and its collective contribution to the positive peacebuilding outcomes in fragile countries and countries emerging from conflict. I would also like to thank Ambassador Gasana for his statement and leadership in the past year, as well as Ambassador Momen for his contribution.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, delivered earlier during this debate. Let me add a few remarks in my national capacity.

The report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) that we are discussing today, especially in its part on the country-specific configurations, testifies to the Commission's continuous effort to support national capacity development and to marshal resources, as well as to better align all key actors behind common peacebuilding objectives under appropriate instruments of engagement. Croatia welcomes last year's early adoption of the road map for actions, a key operational instrument for the work of the Commission during the year, as well as all activities undertaken in the process of its thorough implementation.

The development of strong, reliable and inclusive civilian institutions and the accompanying capacities represents the foundation of a nation's sustainable peace and well-being. It is our conviction that this tremendous undertaking should start with the rapid identification of whatever national capacities have outlived the conflict and their consequent careful nurturing and intensive rebuilding. Swift and effective action on the part of the United Nations and the international community, and, in particular, the prompt deployment of the appropriate civilian expertise to assist this effort is of the utmost importance.

In that context, Croatia is closely following the current civilian capacity review, which is aimed at producing a more demand-oriented, partnership-based, flexible and effective mechanism for the transfer of civilian skills and knowledge to national actors. Furthermore, Croatia supports the establishment of a global marketplace for civilian capacity, administered by the United Nations civilian capacity team, whose main objective is to ensure a better match between demand and supply in the area of specialized civilian capacities in commonly identified critical areas. We look forward to future close cooperation with the team, including during its upcoming visit in April.

Croatia is following with great interest other relevant initiatives in the field of State-building and peacebuilding. We particularly welcome the recent initiative on fragile and conflict-affected countries that resulted in last year's Busan New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. Starting from the indisputable fact that

fragile States and those emerging from conflict require a fundamentally different approach to development because of the particular security and political challenges they face, the new initiative clarifies existing peacebuilding and State-building goals, introduces new modalities for engagement and distinctly identifies commitments with a view to further building mutual trust and cooperation.

It also endeavours to forge a new, inclusive and representative global partnership that brings together traditional donors and new ones, which often share experiences similar to the ones of the nations they are ready to support. Croatia awaits the preliminary results of the new deal pilot projects and the development of the appropriate indicators to help measure progress in priority areas, including legitimate politics, civilian security, impartial justice, employment and efficient management. In our opinion, the PBC should pay attention to this new initiative, especially the ways in which it endeavours to resolve issues related to accountability, transparency and a results-oriented approach.

Finally, Croatia welcomes the fact that the reporting period also witnessed a continued improvement in synergies between the PBC and the PBF, as further evidenced by the PBC report in the relevant country-specific sections. During the year, we have seen examples of the successful catalytic role played by PBF, which was followed, as intended, by the more substantial, long-term financing of recovery and reconstruction efforts. In short, and as has been pointed out time and time again, any form of international assistance should be provided in a timely manner, demand-driven and sustainable, and, most importantly, it should be delivered in the form of direct support to national institutions, according to previously established national priorities.

There is obviously room for even more flexible and results-oriented PBC engagement in efforts to help societies emerging from conflict build durable peace. Croatia, as the newly elected Vice-Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission, stands ready to play its part in the collective efforts towards that end.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Rwanda, Ambassador Eugène-Richard Gasana, Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for 2011, and the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, Ambassador Momen, current Chairperson of the PBC, for their statements and for presenting the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its fifth session (A/66/675). May I also commend Ambassador Gasana for his outstanding performance at the helm of the Commission in 2011, particularly in connection with the deepening of institutional relations with African regional organizations and the implementation of the recommendations of the 2010 review. I can assure Ambassador Momen of our full cooperation in 2012. I welcome also the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/66/659).

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia as PBC Non-Aligned Movement coordinator.

I wish to pay tribute to the work done by the Chairs of the country-specific configurations and their support teams in the various areas related to assisting the Governments of the countries on the agenda of the PBC. I wish also to express my gratitude for the work done by the Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins, and her Office in helping the PBC and the various configurations.

Chile wishes to state that during the reporting period, Guinea was placed on the agenda of the PBC — the sixth such country. That shows that the role of the Commission is gaining strength over time in a manner commensurate with the needs of each country.

My country acknowledges the considerable efforts made to further the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2010 review. We wish in particular to stress the importance given to the development of national capacities. We recognize the progress made in the Commission's interaction with the principal organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council. We attribute great importance to and highlight the participation of the Chairs of the respective configurations and of the representatives of the countries involved in discussions of the mandate of a political or peacekeeping mission.

However, my country believes that there is room for further progress in that respect, in order to debate, in an informal and flexible manner, issues related to peacebuilding that are of interest to the Security Council. We believe that such a debate could take place in the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations. Although these are two different aspects of the processes in post-conflict States, they are two sides

of the same coin. Chile reiterates the need to implement the related recommendation of the 2010 review. Thus we welcome the fact that the Chairperson of the PBC is now invited to participate in the work of the General Assembly and present the perspective of the Commission in the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations.

Regarding the support that must be provided in the area of the development of civil capacity, Chile acknowledges the value of the interaction of the Commission with the Senior Advisory Group and the fact that the Commission is the appropriate forum for the implementation of a significant number of the recommendations made in the independent report (A/65/747) of the Group.In that regard, it is necessary to underscore South-South and triangular cooperation among participating countries that have been successful in peacebuilding. Here, Latin America can provide a wealth of experience.

Moreover, my delegation appreciates the briefing of the Under-Secretary-General of Field Support, Ms. Susana Malcorra, to the Commission on 22 July 2011. Chile shares the view of those countries that, on that occasion, expressed interest in the fact that some countries on the Commission's agenda could act as a bellwether in implementing partnership agreements.

My country underscores the work done in the past year in establishing new relationships with global, regional and subregional international organizations, in particular the partnership with the African Development Bank. Closer ties with the World Bank, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group, in the context of the United Nations, are steps that, for my delegation, are of particular importance to the Commission's outreach work. The High-level Meeting on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, held in Rwanda last November, should also be underscored. The Rwanda experience is of great value to the Commission's work.

Women and young people are at the heart of the Commission's activity. Chile values the meeting with the Executive Board of UN-Women and supports its conclusions, in particular that of activating dialogue between country configurations and UN-Women on country priorities for women's participation in peacebuilding from the beginning.

Turning to the Secretary-General's report on the Peacebuilding Fund, we underscore the Fund's increasing success and thank Member States that have made that possible, but, at the same time, we call on States to continue providing contributions. Meanwhile, Chile believes that ways to extend the Fund's outreach should be considered in order to attain further resources. In that regard, we believe that joint initiatives with the private sector should be strengthened.

Furthermore, we welcome the fact that the gender promotion initiative found a specific place in the PBF from which it could be promoted beyond the countries on the Commission's agenda. Lastly, we urge the Commission to continue working on developing a communications strategy to communicate its work and objectives to a greater number of institutions and a broader audience.

My country believes that the Peacebuilding Commission is the best advisory intergovernmental platform to guide and develop peacebuilding awareness and practice. In that regard, I reiterate my country's commitment to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Okafor (Nigeria): On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I would like to thank the President for convening this important debate on the annual report (A/66/675) of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Secretary-General's report (A/66/659) on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

Like other delegations before me, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Eugène-Richard Gasana, Permanent Representative of Rwanda and outgoing former Chair of the PBC, for his able and committed leadership in 2011. Allow me also to congratulate Ambassador Abdul Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, on his election as Chair of the PBC and to wish him success in conducting the affairs of the Commission in 2012. Let me also thank the Chairs of the various configurations for their untiring efforts in leading and channelling our support for the countries on the agenda, as well as the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office for the effective and substantive support that it continues to provide for our work.

Nigeria fully aligns itself with the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement. Nonetheless, we wish to highlight a few other issues of particular interest to my delegation.

The annual report of PBC before us is the first since the 2010 review of the United Nations peacebuilding

architecture (A/64/868, annex). It reflects the commendable progress that the PBC has made, in particular in supporting national peacebuilding efforts in the six countries on its agenda, namely, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, the report also highlights the challenges that remain in those countries, as well as in our collective efforts to improve the functioning and the effectiveness of the PBC.

There are five main challenges that we, as States Members of the United Nations, and of the PBC in particular, should address in order to increase the impact of our work in supporting peacebuilding efforts.

First, the PBC should intensify its efforts to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation among relevant stakeholders and actors, both at Headquarters and in the field. Progress in that area would help to avoid the overlapping of actions and duplication of efforts and to ensure greater clarity of responsibility and accountability. Nigeria also underlines the need for increased collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations in the formulation and implementation of post-conflict peacebuilding activities.

Secondly, the PBC will not fulfil that role of promoting coherence and complementarity of actions if we, as Member States, do not strengthen the coherence of our views and actions in the various intergovernmental bodies in which we participate.

Thirdly, membership of the PBC implies a commitment — indeed, a political and moral obligation — to support global peacebuilding efforts, irrespective of where the need arises. Yet, there is now a growing tendency to allow the chairs of the country-specific configurations of the PBC to bear the burden of supporting the countries on the agenda. The original design of the PBC, reflected in its unique composition, was for all members to make an effective contribution to peacebuilding. Such contributions can take various forms, including actively participating in the discussion of country configurations, joining field trips to the countries on the agenda, and sharing experiences on peacebuilding and development.

Fourthly, while developing countries may not be able to provide significant financial support, most have important experiences to share. The High-Level Meeting on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, convened by Rwanda in November 2011, which is described in detail in the annual report, shows the potential of the PBC as a forum whose membership has a variety of experiences to share. In that regard, the PBC should reflect on how it can best share the accumulated lessons learned in peacebuilding in the countries on the agenda.

Fifthly, there can be no serious peacebuilding without funding, but funding must be directed at critical peacebuilding priorities in order to achieve the desired and tangible results. That brings me to the Secretary-General's annual report on the PBF.

The report of the Peacebuilding Fund reveals a significant increase in contributions, from $31.3 million in 2010 to $66.73 million in 2011, despite the global recession. We thank and commend Member States and other donors that have made those invaluable contributions. However, we urge other donors, especially philanthropic organizations and the private sector, to provide more contributions for the sustenance of global peace and security.

Although Nigeria's cumulative commitments to and deposits in the Peacebuilding Fund may not appear considerable, we have contributed significantly at the bilateral level and collaborated with the United Nations in peacebuilding strategies, using our expertise and best practices, especially in peacekeeping operations.

Effective post-conflict peacebuilding requires a smart combination of international support for, and national ownership by, countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. The role of the PBC is to mobilize and sustain international support. However, the countries on its agenda must exercise effective national ownership. Indeed, peace will be sustainable only if national institutions and other actors that understand the root causes of the conflicts undertake appropriate efforts to avert any relapse into conflict. We all have a stake in ensuring that this winning formula is applied in the countries that the PBC helps.

Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar (Pakistan): I wish to thank the President for having convened today's debate. We are grateful to the Permanent Representative of Rwanda for his able stewardship of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2011. We also extend our best wishes to the present Chairperson, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, for carrying forward the work of the PBC.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Non- Aligned Movement.

The fifth session of the PBC, covered in the annual report (A/66/675) under consideration today, was the first session after the review process was completed last year.

The review process was helpful in realigning our collective focus with three key concepts of peacebuilding. These include: first, the strict prioritization of targeted areas, focusing on security sector reform, local capacity-building and economic revitalization; secondly, strengthening the emphasis on the development aspect of peacebuilding; and, thirdly, refining the nexus between peacekeeping and peacebuilding. A more analytical description of those trends in the PBC report could enhance understanding of the peacebuilding concept and experience.

In the 2010 review, we had concluded that it was important to align the strategic framework for countries on the PBC's agenda with the respective national priorities and policies, under complete local ownership. It is encouraging to note that the country-specific configurations refined their roles and undertook important initiatives in resource mobilization and in developing synergies with international financial institutions.

The tangible contributions made by the respective country-specific configurations to the long-term stability and economic development of post-conflict countries will enhance our collective understanding and appreciation of the challenges and complexities of peacebuilding endeavours.

We can cite the progress achieved towards sustainable peace in Burundi and Sierra Leone, which has helped create templates for successful post-conflict peacebuilding strategies. Our goal in the PBC should be to apply this knowledge and understanding in helping Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and the Republic of Guinea to address their respective challenges in the area of peacebuilding. It is critical to listen carefully to the view of the countries concerned and learn from their own experiences of engagement with the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. The resultant knowledge base will help forge consensus on peacebuilding-related matters as well as a common understanding of the inherent challenges and constraints of a post-conflict situation.

The success of United Nations peacebuilding endeavours requires adequate financial resources. As the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) provides the seed money to attract other sources of financing, it is an essential component of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. Last year the Secretary-General set a target of disbursing $100 million each year in the next three years from the PBF. We believe that this target is commensurate with the challenges ahead. Achieving that target will require donations from Member States, which has been aptly characterized as an investment in peace.

Pakistan has been contributing to the PBF for the past two years. Our contribution reflects our commitment to United Nations peacebuilding endeavours and our confidence in the PBF's administration. To realize the PBF's catalysing potential, it is essential to expand its donor base. Member States and the Secretariat must provide the PBF with the resources and operational flexibility necessary to improve its efficacy.

Pakistan is a founding member of the Organizational Committee of the PBC. In the 2003-2004 period, Pakistan had proposed the creation of an ad hoc composite committee on peacebuilding. Two years later, that proposal crystallized into the PBC. In the last six years, we have actively contributed to the work of the PBC. As a leading contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions, Pakistan has vital stakes in successful peacebuilding efforts.

We hope that with our collective efforts, we will be able to equip the PBC and the PBF to become true beacons of hope for the conflict-ridden members of our human family.

Mr. Sammis (United States of America): Like others, the United States would like to thank Ambassador Momen and Ambassador Gasana, as well as the Chairs of the six country-specific configurations, the Peacebuilding Support Office and our in-country partners for their dedication and leadership. They all deserve credit for the progress that is being made regarding peacebuilding.

The United States actively supports the work of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) as important instruments to assist countries making the fragile transition from conflict to sustainable peace. They help us sustain attention to countries emerging from conflict, develop more effective strategies to build peace, and mobilize the resources necessary to prevent a relapse into violence. We particularly appreciate the Commission's commitment to addressing the overarching

recommendations of the 2010 five-year review: enhance the Commission's impact in the field and strengthen working relationships with key partners.

We are gratified to see both focus and evidence of results, for instance, focusing the Commission's political advocacy in Sierra Leone on the importance of inter-party dialogue and, in Liberia, on the imperative of accountability among governmental officials; and helping stimulate private investment in Burundi and mobilize substantial funds for Sierra Leone under the auspices of the United Nations Joint Vision plan. We are also pleased that the Commission is actively working with the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other international financial institutions. Those partnerships are essential to seeing resources flow to peacebuilding priorities.

Indeed, we welcome the range of recent efforts made at the United Nations to expand and diversify partnerships with key peacebuilding forums and actors outside the United Nations. We particularly commend the leadership of the Group of Seven plus fragile and conflict-affected States, which has helped to set the global agenda on peacebuilding, including through the new deal for engagement with fragile States, endorsed recently in Busan. We encourage PBC interaction with that group and related efforts.

We also welcome the Commission's efforts to deepen and diversify its working relationships with the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on practical issues of mutual concern and to help raise the profile of peacebuilding across the United Nations system. The United States urges the Commission to make even greater progress in heightening its impact in the field and building its credibility as a platform for promoting effective peacebuilding practices.

As for the Peacebuilding Fund, its evolving role as a rapid and relevant instrument for early peacebuilding efforts is to be commended. The expansion of its allocations, its commitment to rapid response and its improved country support. The expansion of its allocations, its commitment to rapid response and its improved country support are all noteworthy. We encourage continued refinement of the Fund's focus in configuration countries that bolster investment on the part of national leaders and stakeholders in its programmes.

We all have a stake in strengthening the United Nations capacity to support peacebuilding. Helping societies recover from conflict is never an easy task, but the United Nations peacebuilding architecture was created precisely to forge more coordinated and more effective solutions to consolidating peace. With proper diligence and the will to institutionalize lessons learned, the Commission and the Fund have great potential to promote enduring peace.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, let me congratulate the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Advisory Group of the Peacebuilding Fund on the quality of their reports (A/66/675 and A/66/659, respectively). Those two documents are part of the broader context of a better United Nations approach to the phase of post-conflict peacebuilding.

We also wish to pay a warm tribute to Ambassador Gasana of Rwanda, who presided over the Peacebuilding Commission by emphasizing the good practices that could be extended to all the countries on the Commission's agenda. We also wish the Ambassador of Bangladesh every success in the mission that awaits him as head of the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as the Tunisian Ambassador in his capacity as coordinator of the Movement of Non-Aligned peacebuilding group.

Seven years ago and upon the recommendation contained in the declaration of heads of State in 2005 (resolution 60/1), the General Assembly and the Security Council jointly established the Peacebuilding Commission, a structure intended by Member States to be a new milestone of institutional and financial support to States that had turned the painful page of conflict and were now committed to re-establishing their societies. Today, the Peacebuilding Commission is a fundamental element of the peace and security architecture of the United Nations. With six African countries on its agenda — Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Central African Republic and Burundi — the Peacebuilding Commission faces the ongoing challenge of advising, supporting and assisting States in the critical post-conflict recovery stage.

The work of improving the performance of the Peacebuilding Commission is ongoing. Its mechanisms and the flexibility of its country configurations allow for a better consideration of the specificities of each situation. The identification of a strategic framework

and the signing of statements of mutual commitment promote national ownership. However, the host countries must be better heard. A true partnership approach is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity.

In that respect, Morocco calls for an advisory mechanism in the Peacebuilding Commission, bringing together the agenda countries and the Chairs of the country configurations. Such an advisory group would allow for an effective adjustment and implementation of peacebuilding strategies. We welcome the intent of the Secretariat to develop a comprehensive road map for 2012 to allow the approach of the Peacebuilding Commission to be more targeted and more oriented towards measuring its impact on the ground.

I would now like to address the Peacebuilding Fund. The Peacebuilding Fund is a key financial instrument for supporting peacebuilding projects, not only for the six countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, but also for the 16 other countries that have requested support for so-called catalytic projects. While the amount of funds pledged by donors for 2011 was $66 million, the objective of attaining $100 million for 2012 is within reach despite a grim international financial situation. Morocco, which has supported the Fund since its creation, has tripled the amount of its contributions for 2011-2012 and risen to second place among African financial contributors.

An analysis of the breakdown of projects financed by the Peacebuilding Fund highlights the preponderance of institutional capacity-building projects, in particular in the areas of security sector reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; and reform of the rule of law. We believe that more attention must still be given to projects to support youth employment or initiatives for the development of the private sector.

Four days ago, we adopted a resolution 66/255 on civilian capacities in the post-conflict stage. During the negotiation phase of that resolution, which began in October, 2011, the question arose as to whether it should be a procedural or substantive resolution. Given the importance of that structural process for the United Nations and bearing in mind the quality of the Guéhenno report (A/65/747), my delegation was one of the few that pushed for a substantive resolution. We welcome its adoption and believe that its content sends a strong political signal and a message of encouragement to the Secretariat.

Developing civilian capacities in post-conflict societies requires a common effort of the United Nations as a whole, the commitment of the Secretariat, and the support of Member States. The true work is only beginning. The Guéhenno report and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of its recommendations (A/66/311) are part of our efforts to improve the performance of the United Nations on the ground. We have a collective interest in achieving that objective.

Morocco, with its rich experience in South-South cooperation, believes that countries of the South are in a position to provide more civilian capacities. Using expertise from the South is all the more justified given that many countries of the South share a language or culture and are closer to the realities on the ground. We should use that unique tool of South-South cooperation while we strengthen trilateral cooperation among donors, personnel providers and host countries. This is everyone's business; it is our common challenge.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): I thank the President very much for convening today's meeting. At the outset, I would like to place on record our appreciation to the Peacebuilding Commission for the work that it has carried out during the year.

Bearing in mind the lateness of the hour, I intend to deliver an abridged version of what we have handed over to the interpreters. I thought I would just say it so that they are aware of why I am skipping a few lines.

Allow me at the outset to extend our warm appreciation to Ambassador Gasana for his able stewardship of the Commission's work. My delegation also wishes to felicitate Bangladesh on its assumption of the Peacebuilding Commission's Chair. With Bangladesh at the helm, we see a unique and timely convergence of peacekeeping and peacebuilding tasks and experiences.

Peacebuilding and peacekeeping/peacebuilding are and will remain core activities of the United Nations in times to come. The working relationship of the Peacebuilding Commission, the newest body of the United Nations, with the Security Council and the General Assembly is of critical importance. As a founding member of the Commission, my delegation favours a close, regular and substantive interaction between the Commission, the Assembly and the Council so that the United Nations can deliver coherently when

it comes to setting the peacebuilding agenda and delivering on it.

Peacebuilding is a cooperative and collective effort. The United Nations must work with other peacebuilding actors, including international financial institutions. That, we expect, will have a positive impact on peacebuilding and on the growing need for resources for peacebuilding initiatives. However, in an arena with many players, the United Nations must be conscious of the need to retain the high ground in developing the normative basis for peacebuilding.

My delegation stresses that the United Nations must play the central role in identifying a common peacebuilding vision, in bringing together various actors and in functioning as a bridge between national authorities and various peacebuilding and development actors. Our unique strength lies in our people on the ground. We must ensure that this unique ability is not neglected while we scout for expertise elsewhere. To retain field relevance, peacebuilding concepts and frameworks should evolve in due regard to field expertise and inputs.

We have made strides in streamlining the peacebuilding architecture during the year. Given the challenges on the resources front, it is advisable that the existing mechanisms be allowed and encouraged to perform to their optimum potential. In that regard, Headquarters should enhance the facilitative role with which it grants field leadership space for thoughts and action. An approach that overly relies on manuals and guidelines that are constructed in the abstract and are detached from conflict zones fail as contributions to that aspect of our efforts in the field. My delegation is keen to see our field expertise leading the processes at Headquarters. The expertise we develop must derive from a geographically diverse catchment. Non-representative specialist cadres are a weak first step.

Peacebuilding emerged from peacekeeping. India has been in the forefront of United Nations peacekeeping from its very inception. We firmly believe that peacebuilding actors must strive to make the best of peacekeeping attainments. Like peacekeeping, subsequent peacebuilding components come with inherent challenges, be they security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the rule of law, development quests or economic recovery and employment generation. In that regard, efforts undertaken by Peacebuilding Fund need further elaboration in the context of cross-cutting synergies across the United Nations system.

National ownership is the key to success in peacebuilding. The international community has the duty to make available appropriate capacities to national authorities. The solutions and capacities that authorities seek are those that have been tried and tested in similar environments. Countries that have undergone State-building and democratic transitions have special relevance to our peacebuilding efforts. It is also the responsibility of the international community to provide resources in a predictable manner and at an appropriate level over extended periods.

India strongly supports the role and relevance of regional players in post-conflict scenarios. We are particularly and greatly appreciative of the role played by the African Union in its efforts to develop post-conflict reconstruction capacities.

The Secretariat and the Funds and Programmes must also do more to become effective players capable of providing coherent delivery.

In concluding, I would like to note that India has engaged bilaterally with a number of nations on the peacekeeping/peacebuilding agenda in response to national requirements. We have regularly contributed to the Peacebuilding Fund and are committed to the peacebuilding process. We will continue to remain fully engaged.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): At the outset, allow me to thank the former Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Gasana of Rwanda, for his informative presentation of the report of the PBC on its fifth session (A/66/675), and current Chairperson Momen of Bangladesh for his comprehensive statement.

While Ukraine aligns itself with the statement by the observer of the European Union, I would like to make a few additional points in my national capacity.

We fully share the conviction that only a more relevant, flexible, better performing, better supported, more ambitious and better understood PBC will make a difference on the ground. In our view, the Commission's work last year was conducive to achieving those vital goals.

Let me touch briefly upon one of a number of important fields where noteworthy progress has been

achieved, namely, the area of outreach, partnership and experience-sharing. Here, field visits of inclusive delegations of the PBC country-specific configurations proved to remain a unique instrument for familiarizing configuration members with the situation on the ground, as well for channelling consistent messages of support, advice and advocacy to the countries on the Commission's agenda.

It is worth mentioning that during the latest of such visits — to the Republic of Guinea — about 25 meetings were held with representatives across the whole spectrum of Guinean society, including a very substantive meeting with the President of the country. A field mission of the Liberia configuration last July, in addition to providing an invaluable opportunity for direct interaction with vibrant local communities, allowed members of the delegation, inter alia, to take part in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

The Commission's strengthened outreach edge was exemplified by the holding of the High-level Meeting on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Kigali and the first-ever visit by the group of PBC Chairs to the African Development Bank headquarters in Tunis. In our view, all of those important instances of outreach and partnership bode extremely well for the enhancement of the PBC's relevance, performance and impact on the ground. Ukraine strongly supports that dimension of the Commission's activity and encourages Organizational Committee members, beyond configuration Chairs and steering groups, to actively engage in every precious opportunity to reach out.

As has been pointed out, outreach and partnership are just one of a number of areas where the United Nations peacebuilding agenda has recently made advances. The report before us today faithfully captures other important manifestations of the Commission's added value and its comparative advantages.

In 2011, Ukraine was privileged to serve as a PBC Vice-Chair. We are glad that some of our ideas materialized during that period, in particular with regard to holding the first-ever joint PBC-UN Women high-level event.

As we move forward, Ukraine believes that our priority should remain the implementation of the outcome of the 2010 PBC review process (A/64/868, annex) and the road map for actions designed to achieve its recommendations. Sharpening the Commission's analytical edge and enhancing interaction and closer cooperation between the PBC and the Security Council stand out in that context. In addition, while supporting many important suggestions already made, we deem it necessary for the Organizational Committee to tackle, inter alia, the issue of streamlining PBC procedures and working methods, particularly in terms of the selection of its Chairperson.

In closing, I would like to express our gratitude to the Peacebuilding Support Office for its valuable backing and the expertise that it has provided to the PBC. I would finish by underlining Ukraine's continued strong commitment to the United Nations efforts in the sphere of peacebuilding. A testimony of that dedication is my country's solid record of contributing to the United Nations peacebuilding endeavour, in particular through active military, police and civilian participation in over 20 missions under the auspices of the United Nations. As a member of the Commission's Organizational Committee in 2012, Ukraine will make every effort to further strengthen the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and its impact on post-conflict and fragile societies.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/66/PV.102

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

102nd plenary meeting
Monday, 19 March 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser. . . . . (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Thomson (Fiji), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 31 and 111 (*continued*)

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/66/675)

Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/66/659)

Ms. Kamara (Liberia): It is a pleasure for me to participate in this joint debate on the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its fifth session (A/66/675) and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/66/659). I join previous speakers in thanking the PBC and the Secretary-General for their respective reports. Both reports are informative in explaining the progress made towards mandated objectives and explicit about areas which require further pursuit and greater efforts.

I commend the former Chairperson of the Commission, Ambassador Gasana of Rwanda, for his commitment and the dynamism and innovative spirit with which he carried out his responsibilities in 2011. In the same vein, I congratulate and extend best wishes for success to the new Chairperson of the PBC, Ambassador Momen of Bangladesh.

As one of the six countries on the agenda of the PBC and a beneficiary of PBF resources, Liberia is convinced that these two arms of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture are playing a pivotal and indispensable role in supporting the consolidation of peace in Liberia. The Liberian Government considers its engagement with the Commission to be constructive and rewarding. It is indeed a valuable complement to the joint efforts of the Government and the United Nations family as a whole, with particular recognition given to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to build sustainable peace in the country and promote stability in the West African subregion.

We are broadly supportive of the policy orientations of the Commission and of the activities undertaken over the past year, as well as the suggested focus for the future, which are described in the report. In particular, we believe that the Commission should continue its association with efforts to implement the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict, considering that capacity deficits are prevalent in most, if not all, of the countries on its agenda. The Commission's outreach to and interaction with political and regional groupings, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, and United Nations agencies are not only supported but strongly encouraged in order to optimize coordination and the complementarity of assistance to post-conflict countries.

The Commission's relationship with the Security Council merits special mention. My delegation concurs with the observation in the report that additional efforts need to be made on both sides in order to strengthen the relationship and allow the Commission to enhance its advisory role. In that regard, Liberia believes that the

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country-specific briefings to the Council by the Chairs of the configurations should be institutionalized, considering that some of the countries are also on the Council's agenda.

An overview of Liberia's engagement with the PBC is well and accurately presented in paragraphs 75 to 82 of the Commission's report. Allow me nevertheless to amplify a few points. First, the principle of national ownership is well grounded in the Commission's work in Liberia. The peacebuilding priorities identified by the Liberian Government reflect a national consensus which has been verified on the ground through visits to Liberia by the Chairperson and the configuration as well as the PBF Advisory Group. The three priorities — the rule of law, security sector reform and national reconciliation — underpin the activities which comprise the Liberia priority plan for peace.

The second point is that the reforms undertaken by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), including the decision to use national frameworks in articulating the Commission's commitments and interventions, were successfully introduced in Liberia. The time frame from the submission of Liberia's request, in May 2010, to be placed on the PBC's agenda to the adoption of the statement of mutual commitments for peacebuilding, in November 2010, was significantly shortened by some six months. In addition, the rapid release of funds by the PBF enabled partners to initiate a core justice and security project.

Here, I would like to extend well-deserved appreciation to the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins, and the staff of the PBSO and the PBF for their support and for the guidance which they continue to provide to the Liberian configuration, the Liberian Permanent Mission here in New York and the Peacebuilding Office in our capital, Monrovia. The technical programmatic assistance provided is highly valued.

A third point worthy of mention is the tremendous effort made to ensure that the Commission's work in New York is intricately linked to field realities. The report mentions regular field visits and videoconferencing, which served as the means for the Chair and the configuration to maintain effective liaison with and to participate in decision-making by the field-based Joint Steering Committee. Those visits also afforded opportunities to consult with Government authorities, the donor community on the ground and a cross section of Liberian civil society, including in rural areas.

In addition, the Chair also undertook outreach activities, which included sensitization visits to Washington, D.C., for consultations with the authorities of the United States Government, the World Bank and civil society, and the European Union in Brussels. Preliminary steps were also taken towards collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States. Complementary to those efforts was the active participation of a number of Member States in the steering group established by the Chair.

As representatives may be aware, in the midst of all those positive initiatives, the Permanent Representative of Jordan, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, has been obliged, on account of ill health, to relinquish the position of Chair of the Liberian configuration. I wish to convey, on behalf of my Government and in my own name, deep appreciation to him for the commitment and personal interest that he showed in Liberia. His foresight, dedication, experience and deep insight were attributes that contributed to the measure of success achieved in the partnership between Liberia and the PBC. He became the distinct face of the peacebuilding engagement in Liberia, and has left a solid foundation, which, expectedly, will be built upon by his successor.

My fourth point relates to the catalytic role of the Peacebuilding Fund. I wish to express appreciation to the donors that have provided support to the PBF in order to sustain activities up to 2012. I encourage the international community to ensure that the PBF can continue its investment in peace throughout 2013, and beyond.

The Fund's resources have facilitated many activities, including the establishment of the Land Commission to address the source of the most serious, frequent and numerous conflicts in Liberia, which is land ownership. As a result of the success of its work, the Land Commission is now benefiting from more diverse donor support. The same is true of other activities, such as the radio and drama programmes in local dialects that help Liberians, including Liberian women, to know and exercise their rights and the peace huts that provide space for communities to remain engaged in the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In the area of the rule of law, training programmes have been conducted for magistrates and corrections and immigration officers, who are being deployed to

the counties and border areas to ensure more effective administration of justice in the rural areas. A national youth volunteer service has been launched to respond to the priority area of youth unemployment. Trained youth are being assigned to various counties to work within the local administrations. Perhaps the most prominent of the programmes launched with PBF resources are the five justice and security hubs that are to be constructed in the counties to decentralize law enforcement and make justice mechanisms more accessible to the rural people.

The first hub in Gbarnga, scheduled for completion in April, and the new central prison under construction on the outskirts of Monrovia have been prioritized among the deliverables of the first 150 days of the President's second Administration, which began in mid-January.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the many challenges that still lie ahead for Liberia. The mobilization of resources to meet the requirements of the activities under the priority peace plan is the most pressing of the challenges, especially where it concerns funding of the remaining four justice and security hubs. Developing the technical civilian capacity, particularly in the security sector, to man and manage the hubs, as well as to contribute to the smooth transition of responsibilities from UNMIL to the Government, is another daunting task. The sustainability of the investment in peace in Liberia is a concern that my Government is committed to addressing.

The Commission faces the challenge of working closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, as well as members of the United Nations country team, in particular the United Nations Office for Project Services and the United Nations Development Programme, to build synergies between peacekeeping and peacebuilding on the ground as the plan for a reconfiguration of UNMIL crystallizes. That will mark a critical turning point for Liberia, and it will be important to synchronize time frames and activities to ensure that the transition is as seamless as possible.

For future peace, there is the challenge of developing a national reconciliation strategy that addresses the root causes of the Liberian conflict and sets out to mend rifts in the fabric of the national society. Reconciliation should be home grown. Nevertheless, it can benefit from technical and political support to help Liberians reckon with the difficult episodes of their past.

I also take this opportunity to thank the friends and partners of Liberia for their support, and appeal to them to stay the course with us. We say to them that they cannot grow tired or weary when they are doing well.

Mr. Da Gama (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to express my gratitude to Ambassador Eugène-Richard Gasana, Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations, for his leadership and remarkable work at the head of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2011 and to thank him for his presentation of the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its fifth session (A/66/675), which we endorse. Allow me also to congratulate Ambassador Abdul Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, on his assumption of the chairmanship of the PBC for the year 2012 and to assure him of our full cooperation. I would like to convey our thanks to the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Peacebuilding Fund (A/66/659).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We underscore the role played by Brazil as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration and endorse the statement made by the representative of that country this morning.

Since Guinea-Bissau's placement on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2007, my country has benefited from its training and assistance. That has made it possible for us to achieve very positive and satisfying results in the area of peacebuilding, while recognizing that there are still many challenges to overcome. Owing to reforms undertaken in the context of peacebuilding, in recent years, Guinea-Bissau has been able to record progressive economic growth despite a very tight world economic climate. We have strengthened and improved the fight against drug trafficking and transnational crime, which has significantly reduced that scourge today. However, we should recall that international efforts are decisive for a more effective fight at the national and subregional levels, as, for example, in the context of the West Africa Coast Initiative.

The reform of the defence and security sectors is an essential aspect of the peacebuilding process in my country and remains the highest priority of the Government of Guinea-Bissau. We therefore hope that conditions will soon be in place for us to move

to the implementation phase through the upcoming launching of the special pension fund, which will make it possible to start the demobilization of elements of the armed forces and the security sector. In order to do that ,we hope to benefit as soon as possible from the disbursement of the funds promised by our partners, and we hope that others will join us in that process.

In that context, the role of the PBC in the awareness-raising of partners is of vital importance. We are very happy to learn from the report of the innovative actions of the PBC, particularly the establishment of a partnership between the PBC and the African Development Bank, which will certainly be very useful for the countries on the PBC's agenda.

I would like to conclude by expressing the deep gratitude of the Government of Guinea-Bissau to all the countries and organizations that, on a voluntary basis, provide their financial contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund. It is thanks to them that peace is being consolidated in our countries, particularly in Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Doubane (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the President for his initiative to convene this meeting, as well as to commend the manner in which our work has been led since this morning.

In welcoming the extremely detailed and thorough report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/66/659), which is the topic of our debate today, I wish to pay well-deserved tribute to His Excellency Mr. Eugène-Richard Gasana, Permanent Representative of Rwanda, for his leadership as former Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), as well as His Excellency Mr. Abulkalam Abdul Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, as the new Chairperson.

My country, the Central African Republic, which is fragile in its post-conflict phase, has been included on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda since 2008. After initial financing that year, $20 million was allocated in 2010 to be used in three areas, namely, security, which includes disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the building of barracks and security sector reform; the rule of law and good governance, with an emphasis on guaranteeing access to justice for the most vulnerable, and including human rights; and the empowerment of communities affected by conflicts, in particular women, children and youth. It should be recalled that those areas are perfectly aligned with the priorities set by the Government.

In the context of the financial crisis, where there has been a dearth of available financing, the Central African Republic welcomes and greatly appreciates the important contribution of the Peacebuilding Fund, which is much needed by the country in its constant effort to meet the needs of its people and combat poverty. Those projects will certainly have a real impact on the beneficiary populations in the areas of intervention.

We would like to see the Peacebuilding Fund improved so that perhaps it may be more efficient, if not yield better results. That is the reason for which we would like to express our wish that there be a genuine partnership between the State and the PBC. It is only by working together that will we be able to achieve the results on the goals we have set and carry them forward, thereby reducing the risk of failure, which would entail countless consequences.

In conclusion, we hope that the Peacebuilding Commission and His Excellency Mr. Jan Grauls, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration, will accept our deep gratitude for their commitment and their steadfast assistance in the process of achieving peace and development in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): At the outset, my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered this morning by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I should now like to make the following statement in my national capacity.

Allow me to thank the Secretary-General and the Chairperson and members of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for the comprehensive report (A/66/659) on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/66/675), as mandated by resolutions 63/282 and 60/180, respectively.

Sierra Leone warmly welcomes the reports, which, among other things, accurately reflect the programmes and activities of the PBF and the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in Siena Leone, and respond to resolution 65/7, which requests the Commission to reflect in its annual reports the progress made in taking forward the recommendations contained in the co-facilitators report on the 2010 review (A/64/868, annex).

Let me also thank the former Chairperson of the PBC, the Permanent Representative of Rwanda, for steering the work of the Commission in an excellent way during his tenure, as well as for his support of the work of the Chair and members of the Sierra Leone configuration. In a similar vein, I would like to welcome the new Chairperson of the PBC, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, and assure him of Sierra Leone's support.

We note and commend the Chairperson's road map for actions in 2011, which focused on taking forward the relevant recommendations from the 2010 review. We also appreciate the continued support of the country-specific configurations of the PBC for countries on the agenda by providing political advocacy and support, fostering coherence among key actors, and intensifying efforts for resource mobilization

We acknowledge the effort made by the PBC in taking forward the recommendations of the 2010 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, in particular the Commission's initiation of activities on the path towards strengthening its impact and demonstrating value added, both in the field and as a policy platform, for the normative development of the peacebuilding discourse in the United Nations and beyond.

We further note the progress made by the Commission through its interaction with regional, subregional and international financial institutions, United Nations entities and the private sector, as well as by experience-sharing by countries that have successfully gone through State-building and peacebuilding, which should be built upon in achieving coherence and coordination and in rallying the relevant actors for early and successful peacebuilding.

In that regard, we note the efforts of the Commission in strengthening its relationship with United Nations operational entities and international financial institutions, and, more important, its efforts in strengthening linkages with the principal organs of the United Nations. We encourage the Commission to continue to interact with the World Bank, the African Development Bank, regional organizations and operational actors of the United Nations system in strengthening their partnership and aligning activities, with a view to enhancing complementarity and coherence among actors in the countries on the agenda. That is important because it essentially has the potential to strengthen the Commission's political advocacy and resource mobilization efforts and address transnational organized crime and drug trafficking.

We also note the Commission's adoption of the statement of mutual commitments in Liberia and Guinea as the new instruments of engagement in line with the findings of the 2010 review on the advantages of a single overarching planning document that includes well-defined peacebuilding elements. Clearly, there is a need for the Commission to promote poverty reduction strategy papers that adequately reflect peacebuilding and State-building priorities. Along those lines, the Commission should take into account the transition phases of peacebuilding and seamlessly adopt the different forms of engagement at every phase.

We urge the Commission to continue building on the contributions to the work of the Senior Advisory Group, in particular in improving the United Nations contribution to strengthening national capacities for peacebuilding. The fundamental principle of national ownership and the importance of supporting national civilian capacity development and institution-building will no doubt broaden and deepen the pool of civilian expertise for peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict. In that regard, the Commission should monitor and make recommendations for the implementation of the Secretary-General's civilian capacity review and assess its practical implications for national capacity-building in critical peacebuilding priority areas.

It is clearly important to emphasize that countries emerging from conflict need an institution like the PBC to serve as a platform to support the country with advice and by raising its profile internationally, building trust and dialogue among the various national stakeholders, and mobilizing financial resources for immediate and long-term peacebuilding priorities, including support to democratic and governance institutions.

However, the PBC's record on resource mobilization remains mixed. In that regard, the PBC should consider what the appropriate goals in the area of resource mobilization should be, including whether it can make a contribution in other areas, such as aid management, aid coordination, technical assistance and outreach to the philanthropic and private sectors.

In that respect, the wider membership of the Peacebuilding Commission should work to identify clearer ways in which it can concretely contribute to

peacebuilding in the countries on the agenda. In that regard, the report should incorporate the initial findings of the Working Group on Lessons Learned, as well as inputs from the views expressed by Member States on the need to develop a field-centric approach, ensuring the timely and predictable financing of peacebuilding activities over the medium to long term.

We acknowledge and appreciate the role of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), which remains crucial for the Commission's efficient functioning through providing assistance in the development of instruments of engagement, assessment of progress towards commitments made therein, or the unblocking of obstacles and identification of opportunities for resource mobilization. The PBC should be clear on what is further expected of the PBSO in its future activities in support of the work of the Commission and the countries on the agenda, especially in enhancing the visibility of the Commission's work in the field.

Sierra Leone has had fruitful engagement with both the PBC and the PBF. As noted in the PBC report, through the relentless effort of the Sierra Leone configuration, as well as donors and development partners, the Commission has made tremendous progress in its peacebuilding efforts, chiefly by aligning the peacebuilding elements of the Agenda for Change of the Government of Sierra Leone with the Joint Vision of the United Nations country team and resource mobilization efforts.

In that regard, we express profound appreciation to all our donors that continue to invest in successful peacebuilding elements aligned to our development framework. The recent financial contribution made by Australia, Canada, Italy and the United States of America towards addressing the funding gap in the implementation of the Agenda for Change is testimony to those countries' commitment to ensuring successful peacebuilding through the support of national development frameworks.

The Agenda for Change provides a strong partnership link between Sierra Leone and the United Nations and the donor community. To date, its implementation has had a great impact on peacebuilding and in laying the foundation for opening the path to sustainable development and peace consolidation. Furthermore, through the country-specific configuration and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, the PBC provided a platform for enhanced dialogue among political parties and all national stakeholders with a clear commitment to ensuring durable peace and stability. Today, Sierra Leone is considered a best practice in donor coordination.

Through engagement with the PBC, the PBF released $35 million in 2007 as catalytic funding to support well-defined peacebuilding initiatives, including contributions to the reparation of war victims, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, emergency support to the energy sector, youth enterprise development, good governance, the rule of law and public service delivery. That was followed by a second envelope of $7 million to enhance political dialogue and the participation of civil society in the political process leading up to the 2012 elections, among others. Essentially, the PBF contributed to a visible peace dividend, and its impact on peacebuilding cannot be overestimated. According to a recent independent evaluation, such contributions also proved effective. However, the PBF funding mechanism is designed to kick-start the pilot phase of key peacebuilding projects. That requires additional and sustained support for such projects to be fully developed.

The PBF's catalytic funding mechanism remains crucial to preventing a relapse into conflict. We therefore thank the Member States whose contributions have led to a significant increase in the Peacebuilding Fund — from $31.3 million to $66.73 million. We urge other Member States that are in a position to contribute to the Fund to invest in achieving durable peace and stability. However, there is a need to develop greater synergy among the PBF, the PBSO and the Peacebuilding Commission.

The New Deal for International Engagement in Fragile States, recently agreed in Busan, as well as the publication of the World Development Report 2011 and the ongoing work on peacebuilding at the United Nations, provide an opportunity for countries undergoing transition or post-conflict recovery to have their voices, perspectives and needs better heard at the United Nations. The Peacebuilding Commission, as a whole, should serve as a global platform for such discussions, while the country-specific configurations should provide political support for field-level implementation.

The Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration, Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski, visited Sierra Leone in January this year. His report and briefing

on the configuration underscored the progress made in addressing key peacebuilding priorities and the need for enduring support, particularly in the area of youth unemployment and empowerment, building the capacity of the police, and strong private sector growth that could translate into a more tangible peace dividend and sustainable peace consolidation.

Let me also express Sierra Leone's gratitude to the Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration for his unreserved commitment towards achieving Sierra Leone's peacebuilding objectives, along with our development transformation goals.

In conclusion, as one of the first countries on the PBC agenda, Sierra Leone has charted a path from which others can potentially learn. That has involved adjusting early approaches in order to make more effective use of PBC resources, lowering the bureaucratic burden placed on the Government and ensuring better alignment with national priorities. It has also entailed a shift in the perspective from heavy field-level engagement, with an operational focus, to a more political role that concentrates on how the PBC can serve as an international platform for advocacy and action on all aspects of peacebuilding.

Mrs. Smith (Norway): Norway is member of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and a major contributor to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). My country attaches great importance to the peacebuilding architecture of the United Nations. Much has been achieved over the past few years and my delegation is grateful for the active role played by the past and the present Chairs of the Organizational Committee. Yet, it is a fact that the PBC is, as emphasized by Switzerland, relatively new and has to prove its added value. We therefore need to explore ways to enhance its impact. One way of doing so is to bring the Chairs of the different country configurations into closer dialogue with the Security Council.

Norway appreciates the efforts to bring the PBC closer to the concrete experiences of African countries in post-conflict peacebuilding, as well as to initiate dialogue between the PBC and regional institutions in Africa. We would also like to highlight the common meeting of the Organizational Committee of the PBC and the Executive Board of UN Women. One of the conclusions of that meeting was to initiate country-specific discussions on the progress and challenges of integrating women into peacebuilding. Indeed, the PBC and its configurations can play an important role in securing an effective follow-up to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Let me highlight two issues from the report we have in front of us (A/66/675). One of the overarching recommendations from the 2010 review (A/64/868, annex) was to enhance the interaction and the impact between the Commission and the field. The way we see it, the country-specific configurations should work as a type of support group for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations country teams on the ground. We think that this approach could have been highlighted even more in the report.

Secondly, we value all the work on resource mobilization that has been done, in particular in the country-specific configurations. At the same time, we must be candid. Due to severe financial constraints, the prospects for increased aid are dim. We would encourage new partners and emerging Powers to increase their support. Let me stress that we are pleased with the broadening of the donor base of the Peacebuilding Fund.

The PBF plays an essential role in furthering the United Nations peacebuilding agenda. The Fund's focus on countries low on the donor radar, its swiftness, willingness to take risk and its large donor base constitute the Fund's main strengths and added value. Furthermore, considerable progress has been made in establishing the PBF as an effective and accountable funding mechanism. We thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins, and her staff for their great efforts to that end, and encourage a continued focus on further strengthening the management and follow-up of the PBF. The PBF has obviously demonstrated its added value.

We support the Fund's emphasis on countries on the PBC's agenda and the Group of Seven Plus countries, while we fully agree to include other countries as well. We would also like to highlight the close partnership that the PBF has established with other United Nations funds and programmes and the World Bank. We note from the Secretary-General's report (A/66/659) that the Fund will need to work harder in order to attain the goal of a 15 per cent allocation focused on women's specific needs. We look forward to rapid progress in that regard.

Norway made a new contribution to the PBF last year of $5 million, and we are currently assessing the possibility of providing more funds in 2012.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items for this meeting.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 31 and 111.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The Acting President: The Assembly will now consider the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (b) of agenda item 115, entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions". In order for the Assembly to consider the report of the Fifth Committee under the sub-item, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub item (b) of agenda item 115. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 115 and to proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 115 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions (A/66/540/Add.1)

The Acting President: In paragraph 3 of the report contained in document A/66/540/Add.1, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Kazuo Watanabe of Japan and Mr. Dae-jong Yoo of the Republic of Korea as members of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 19 March 2012 and ending on 31 December 2012 and 31 December 2014, respectively.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Mr. Kazuo Watanabe of Japan and Mr. Dae-jong Yoo of the Republic of Korea as members of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 19 March 2012 and ending on 31 December 2012 and 31 December 2014, respectively?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 115?

It was so decided.

(l) Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission (A/66/746)

The Acting President: In paragraph 3 of the report contained in document A/66/746, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Luis Mariano Hermosillo of Mexico as a member of the International Civil Service Commission for a term of office beginning on 19 March 2012 and ending on 31 December 2013. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Mr. Luis Mariano Hermosillo of Mexico as a member of the International Civil Service Commission for a term of office beginning on 19 March 2012 and ending on 31 December 2013?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub item (l) of agenda item 115?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

United Nations A/66/PV.103

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

103rd plenary meeting
Monday, 26 March 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser. . . . . (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 138 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/66/668/Add.8)

The President: I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/66/668/Add.8, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/66/668/Add.7, Cape Verde and the Gambia have made the payments necessary to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

The President: I should also like to inform members that, since the issuance of document A/66/668/Add.8, Kyrgyzstan has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of that information?

It was so decided.

The President: That information will be reflected in document A/66/668/Add.9, to be issued at a later date.

Agenda item 119 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

Commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 119 at its 83rd plenary meeting, on 12 December 2011, and adopted resolution 66/114, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade".

We are here to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We are here to acknowledge the long suffering of innocent victims and the courage of heroes, resisters and survivors of slavery and the slave trade. We are here to honour millions of Africans forcibly removed from their homes and cast into inhuman conditions. We are here to celebrate the courage of countless men and women who rebelled against that cruel and brutal practice in order to regain freedom, dignity and independence.

The terrible impacts of slavery and the slave trade are still felt to this day. They have devastated continents and countries. They have led to profound social and economic inequalities, and have given rise to hatred, racism and prejudice. We are here today not only to

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raise awareness about the consequences of the slave trade and slavery but, most important, to ensure that such systematic abuse of human rights is never repeated again.

Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms". Yet, more than 200 years since the abolition of slavery, we are again faced with this scourge.

Contemporary forms of slavery and slave-like practices have emerged in the forms of racism, trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, child labour, forced marriage, and the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict. Poverty, illiteracy and economic, social and gender inequality are all factors that worsen modern forms of slavery. Combating slavery means taking an all-encompassing approach throughlaws, mechanisms, cooperation, outreach programmes and education. Instruments that are already in place, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, as well as the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, should be fully utilized to bring about necessary change in attitudes and customs, punish the offenders and support innocent victims in regaining their lives and dignity.

The United Nations and all its Members have an obligation to work tirelessly to eradicate modern forms of slavery. It is a fight that goes beyond the role of Governments. Everyone, including the private sector, civil society and individuals, has an important part to play. That is why, on 3 April here in New York, I intend to convene an interactive dialogue on the theme "Fighting human trafficking: partnership and innovation to end violence against women and girls". The event will be organized in cooperation with the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Rising to the challenges before us will require solidarity, commitment, engagement and partnership from all segments of society. We have to work closely to educate future generations about the fact that slavery in any form is unacceptable. Commemorating the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade provides us with an opportunity to keep that issue visible. We can also raise awareness of the dangers associated with racism and prejudice and ensure that one of the worst violations of human rights in the history of humankind is never forgotten.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the efforts of the steering committee of the Caribbean Community and the African Group, as well as the Department of Public Information, for organizing this special commemorative meeting to pay homage to the heroes, resisters and survivors.Let us learn from the horrors and the sacrifices of the past and ensure, through concrete actions and results, that slavery in all its forms is forever eliminated.

I would also like to encourage Member States to contribute to the Fund. That is very important and I hope it will be given consideration.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: It is a pleasure to join all present for this important observance. Let me offer a special welcome to all our guests, including the performers who will grace this event. I bring warm greetings from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who stands with us on this Day and on this cause.

The transatlantic slave trade was a tragedy because of slavery's fundamental barbarism and immense scope, and because of its organized, systematic nature. One set of human beings — the traders, owners and others who participated in and profited from that evil enterprise — elevated themselves above another, assaulting their victims' very essence.

Let me share with those present just a brief snippet of testimony from a former slave. That testimony has been posted on the United Nations Radio website as part of our information outreach for this Day. "I can remember", she said, when "they carried my father away and carried two sisters and one brother, and left me".

This International Day was established for her and for the many millions of people whose lives and families were destroyed and whose dignity was brutally negated. The United Nations website provides more information on what this and other former slaves have had to say about heir experience. Other selections feature scholars and others talking about slavery's origins, its hideous mechanics, its impact and its legacy. I urge everyone to take advantage of this important resource.

The United Nations will be commemorating the suffering of the victims in another way: with a permanent memorial to be erected here at Headquarters. That memorial will rightly recognize that this tragedy, which had its most horrendous impact on Africans and people of African descent, also disgraced humankind as a whole.

In addition to remembering the crimes of the slave trade, we also use this Day to teach about the causes and consequences of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We have a shared responsibility to be vigilant about the many contemporary forms of slavery, including debt bondage, trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, the worst forms of child labour, forced marriage and the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.

New laws, institutions and mindsets have given us better tools for the struggle against those ills. Yet we must also acknowledge that bias is on the increase in many parts of the world. We can still see discriminatory practices gaining political, moral and even legal recognition, including through the platforms of some political parties and organizations, and through the use of modern communication technologies to disseminate ideas based on the notion of racial superiority.

The United Nations remains firmly committed to countering such hateful acts and trends. This is a matter of principle, in keeping with the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Political Declaration adopted at last year's High-level Meeting of the General Assembly. It is also a means to an end, since intolerance and discrimination are among the roots of conflict and are major obstacles to development.

The theme of this year's observance, "Honouring the heroes, resisters and survivors", pays tribute to those who stood up against slavery when the trade was at its height, and those who stand up now to protect against its manifestations today. On this International Day, let us all reaffirm our commitment to combating racism and to building societies based on justice, equality and solidarity.

The President: Before proceeding further, I should like to consult Member States on the format of today's commemorative meeting.

Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 16 September 2011, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the format for commemorative meetings include statements by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Chairmen of the five regional groups and the representative of the host country.

If there is no objection, and without setting a precedent, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include in today's meeting a statement by Mr. Rick Kittles, Scientific Director of Washington, D.C.-based African Ancestry Incorporated, and some cultural presentations?

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Chipaziwa (Zimbabwe): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on this solemn occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade with the theme "Honouring the heroes, resisters and survivors".

At the outset, let me convey the African Group's sincere appreciation of the steadfast and commendable efforts of our colleagues in the Caribbean Community in sustaining the momentum of raising awareness of this painful chapter in our shared history. For the same reason, the African Group also appreciates the Secretariat's efforts, particularly those of the Department of Information and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as other concerned stakeholders. Allow me also to reiterate that Africa continues to fully and unconditionally support those efforts, whose purpose is to ensure that such barbaric, primitive, State-condoned and blatant abuses of human rights are condemned by all and that they never happen again, in whatever form.

It is the sincere hope of Africa that people the world over will pay tribute to the victims of the abhorrent commerce in humans and vow to abolish such crimes forever. This Day is an opportunity to reflect on and address the historic legacy of the slave trade, which still characterizes modern perceptions and the treatment of Africans as well as descendants of enslaved Africans. It is a fact that, hundreds of years after most countries officially abolished slavery, Africans in the diaspora and people of African descent who may or may not be descended from slaves continue to suffer from the racial

discrimination that characterized that frightful era. Surely this must come to an end. If all Member States are committed to eradicating those traces of slavery, it is imperative that they vigorously implement programmes and activities that disseminate that message of equality and respect for the diversity of all peoples within their territories.

The African Group continues to stress the importance and centrality of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which resulted from the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, as a turning point for the international community which recognized past injustices and the need to rectify the current situation of peoples of African descent. The 2009 outcome of the Durban review process is also pivotal in combating racial discrimination and its effects. All countries should embrace the recommendations from those processes. We add that there is no value in demonizing those noble processes.

It is also our considered view that honouring the heroes, resisters and survivors will not be enough without addressing the issue of reparations. The African Group will continue to push for the matter be deliberated in the General Assembly. Attention to the issue is long overdue. What we can also promise is that that demand will not go away.

Unfortunately, despite the unequivocal abolition of slavery, its contemporary forms and manifestations have not been eradicated. Millions of human beings, including women and children from all over the world, are trapped in serfdom, forced and bonded labour, trafficking, domestic slavery, sexual slavery and other abhorrent practices. Those practices must be eradicated. All Governments must commit to preventing those vices from manifesting themselves on their territories.

The African Group is supportive of the efforts to erect a permanent memorial at United Nations Headquarters in honour of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. The African Group believes that once finalized, the memorial should acknowledge the crimes and atrocities perpetrated over the course of four centuries and serve as an educational tool to inform future generations of the mechanisms and mindsets that gave rise to that tragedy. Hopefully, the permanent memorial will also go a long way towards providing a clear rebuke to those who continue to deny that slavery was a result of extreme racial discrimination. What is also so incomprehensible is the denial of the huge contributions made by slaves to the creation of wealth in the lands to which they were forcibly taken.

The African Group recognizes the importance and necessity of sustained voluntary contributions for erecting the permanent memorial. We urge those who have not yet done so to contribute to the Trust Fund. Our collective minds, and education, will ensure that those gallant women and men of Africa are never forgotten. We would also add that these western shores were not the only destination of African slaves throughout the centuries.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Federated States of Micronesia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian and Pacific States.

Mrs. Chigiyal (Federated States of Micronesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Asian and Pacific States.

Today, as we pause to observe the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, it is only proper and fitting that the General Assembly pay solemn tribute to the millions of victims of one of the greatest crimes committed against humankind. As we reflect on the theme of this year's commemoration, "Honouring the heroes, resisters and survivors", we pay tribute to the millions of Africans who were subjected to one of the greatest historical injustices and atrocities ever committed against humankind. In our remembrance and tribute to those heroes, we must approach that terrible human tragedy with far greater commitment to rid the world of racism, hatred, intolerance, prejudice and the many other faces it has taken to manifest itself in our world today.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reminds us that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Nothing less is required of us if we are to realize the principles enshrined in the Declaration.

We must all take encouragement in the great initiative that our brothers and sisters from the States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) spearheaded, which has culminated in today's annual commemoration. The opportunity for a moral recommitment to the principles and purposes laid down in the United Nations Charter is here, and must include the determination to

take action across the entire spectrum of the General Assembly's agenda — and in our societies as well — to combat the legacy of racial discrimination, bigotry and prejudice.

With due respect, I would go further and say that moral recommitment must also include our determination to take actions that include supporting the Member States of CARICOM and other States Members that have united in purpose and efforts to erect on the grounds of the United Nations a lasting symbol in tribute to the heroes and the lessons that we must embrace from their courage, dignity, resilience and the fight for equality and humanity, lest their struggles be forgotten.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Albania, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Jorgji (Albania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

We have gathered at a special meeting today to commemorate the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, under the theme "Honouring the heroes, resisters and survivors". For several centuries, millions of people of African descent were taken from their homes and families and forcibly shipped across the Atlantic. Many of them lost their lives due to the appalling inhuman conditions in which they were kept and treated during their journey, while those who survived were forced to work as slaves and were deprived of any dignity or rights.

Despite all the suffering and oppression, the hope and spirit of freedom of the slaves prevailed and thrived. Their struggle was not in vain. In the spring of 1807, the transatlantic slave trade was abolished, while society's determination to put a definitive end to such practices continued to grow.

More than 140 years later, the peoples of the United Nations decided, by adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to speak loud and clear. In its Article 1, that historic document states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Furthermore, in its Article 4, the Declaration states that "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms."

At today's commemoration of the 205th anniversary of the day that marked the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, we pay special tribute to the courage and resilience of those brave men and women who stood up and fought against the system, thus becoming an inspiration not only to those who suffered as they did, but also to many other free people with free minds who engaged themselves in anti-slavery movements, risking their lives and often paying the ultimate price for their noble beliefs.

Apart from the suffering of the slaves themselves, the African continent, too, experienced the long-lasting consequences of the transatlantic slave trade in many ways. Therefore, such commemorative events are of particular importance and significance, not only for remembering the victims of slavery and paying tribute to those who bravely fought against it, but also to ensure that everyone is aware of that tragic part of the history of humankind in order to draw lessons from it and to make sure that such atrocities are prevented from being repeated in any form in the future.

In view of all this, on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States I would like to congratulate the Steering Committee comprising States members of the Caribbean Community and the African Group, as well as representatives of the Secretariat, on having organized the week-long series of remembrance events, including this commemorative meeting of the General Assembly. In particular, we appreciate the role of those countries whose initiative, leadership and commitment led to the adoption of resolutions 61/19 and 65/239, establishing the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and laying the ground for the erection of a permanent memorial here at Headquarters.

In conclusion, as we commemorate the abolition of slavery more than two centuries ago, we are aware that the battle against that phenomenon is still far from over. We still witness modern forms of slavery, including forced labour and the trafficking of women and children, among others. Such crimes continue to have a serious negative impact on people's lives and societies. We cannot and should not look away and ignore such realities. Instead, this moment of remembrance and reflection should inspire us to enhance our efforts and to make use of all means available in order to put an end to such criminal practices, while, at the same time, trying to cut and eliminate the roots that generate them and keep them alive.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Grenada, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Williams (Grenada): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave on today's theme "Honouring the heroes, resisters and survivors".

According to a scholar from the Caribbean and Latin American country of Guyana, long before Columbus came to the new world there were Africans living in the Americas. That fascinating historical account by Ian van Sertima did not develop the full quality of the social relations between Africans and the peoples of Central and South America. However, we know that, with the advent of the slave trade and slavery in the Americas, a new and miserable day dawned for the Africans then enslaved in the Americas.

That history of enslavement is terrible, but it is not the whole story. For while the politically and historically inquisitive continue to appropriately debate the many contours and textures of slavery, such inquiries continue to reveal other parts of the story — that there was resistance to slavery by those who fought for justice against that horrific system of injustice.

Today, we pause to be part of that more elevating part of the slavery story by honouring the great success of human emancipation through the prism of the celebration of our heroes, resisters and survivors. In testimony to the greatness of the human will, from that evil came greatness and, in testimony to the proud legacy of those heroes, today and always, we must join all other generations who have followed since and become much more than survivors. We must work for universal freedom. Like heroes, we, too, must become deserving inheritors of the great legacy of freedom fought for and won.

That irrepressible human impulse for dignity, which we need and claim, was demonstrated in our region as early as 1549 by Felipillo in an anti-slavery revolt in the Pearl Islands on Panama's Pacific coast and by another hero, Bayano. That led to one of the largest slave revolts of the sixteenth century in the Americas, setting up autonomous regions known as palenques, not unlike the quilombos of Brazil or the Saramaka of Suriname, indeed, Maroon communities, Garifunas or free societies all a ross the Americas.

On the Gulf of Mexico coast, Yanga, named after Gaspar Yanga, an African who led a rebellion in the late sixteenth century and fought off attempts to retake the settlement, is reportedly the first town of free African slaves in the Americas. In today's cultural and ethnic composition of the Americas, without the parentage, food, family life, music, dance, religion, and more, of its African members, the grouping that today we call Latino/Latina would not exist with such rich variety.

Among our own celebrated heroes, we count Toussaint Louveture, who, in 1804, co-founded today's Haiti, the first black independent republic in the world. We in Grenada gave to Haiti's decades-long struggle for emancipation our own freedom fighter, Julien Fedon, who was deported first from one French colony, that is, Grenada, to another — Haiti, seeking to quell his leadership. But it was in Haiti, with women and men of vision and courage, that, all together, they led a historic slave revolt that succeeded. In short, those island freedom fighters helped to spread freedom across Latin America, becoming pillars of support to the efforts of the liberator Simón Bolívar.

Indeed, all across the Americas, heroes of resistance to slavery abound: John Chatoyer of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Cudjoe of Guyana and Zumbi dos Palmares of Brazil, as well as personalities such as President Ramón Castilla y Marquesado of Peru, whose legislative agenda was important to ending slavery in that South American country.

The resistance was led by men and by women. Nanny of Jamaica is heralded as the female heroine, par excellence, whose strategic work as a military leader eventually led to the ending of slavery in that country and the early beginnings of women's political leadership.Today, in 2012, in the Americas we boast four women heads of Government — in Brazil, Costa Rica, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Nanny and all women freedom fighters would be proud.

We hail the myriad freedoms won as fundamental rights now recognized by the international community and defended across the Caribbean and Latin America and, of course, across the globe. We enjoy the privileges of free society, free enterprise and equal opportunity due to the vision and work of liberation of millions of people of a single ethnic group, namely, Africans in the new world.

Today, the aspirations of people of African descent in the Americas reflect global aspirations. Their contributions are found in every walk of life. In Cuba, this year marks the 200th Anniversary of José Antonio Aponte's anti-slavery uprising. In their long

struggle for independence, African slaves and their descendents have contributed decisively to shaping the Cuban nationality. And so we bow low to bravery in the creation of freedom. We are proud that our African ancestors in the Caribbean and Latin America left their indelible mark for freedom. That is our shining inheritance; that is our unmitigated responsibility to continue. Our collective responsibility is therefore to carry on the legacy of the fight for human dignity, justice and freedom in this hallowed institution of the United Nations.

We recognize the strong solidarity and support that exists between the Caribbean Community and the African Group, who are the main Member States driving the initiatives related to this commemoration. We commend all other partners for their support, particularly UNESCO, which recently completed the first phase of the competition to identify a design for the slavery memorial that will be erected in a prominent place here at the United Nations to honour the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery.

May we all together make a success of completing the memorial, so ably led from within our region, and may we never forget.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of San Marino, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): It is a great honour for San Marino to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States as we gather today to commemorate the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

Today we pay tribute to the millions of victims of the transatlantic slave trade, who were subjected to exploitation and abuse, both physical and mental. For hundreds years, those victims were removed from their homes and denied their freedom.

There is no more heinous crime than depriving a human being of his dignity. More than ever before, we stand behind the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms."

Every day, we States Members of the United Nations redouble our efforts in addressing new daunting challenges that our world has to face. But we also have to look at the past and to learn from it. In that respect, we must educate our children about the unacceptable and unjustifiable crime of slavery. That disgrace for humankind was finally brought to an end, but we have to remember the injustices committed and ensure that they are never forgotten or repeated.

Unfortunately, today we are witnessing a different but not less degrading form of slavery, namely, the trafficking of persons and human organs, sexual slavery, child labour, forced marriages and the sale of children. Millions of people worldwide continue to be treated as property. That unacceptable practice affects all of us. The victims of today's slavery come from the poorest, most vulnerable and most marginalized social groups of our societies.

We are all born free and equal. We need to work together in order to built a better world and a better future in which slavery in all its forms is eradicated and every person is equal in rights and dignity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in this commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

The United States joins others in paying tribute to the millions of victims who were taken from their homes in Africa and sold into brutal slavery that lasted generations and forever changed the lives of their descendants. The suffering they endured must never be forgotten. We also honour today all those, on both sides of the Atlantic, who struggled to abolish slavery and the trade that sustained it.

The United States remains committed to preserving the memory of slavery within our own country's history. We celebrate National African American History Month every February, as a mark of pride in African-Americans and as a rejection of the attitudes that permitted slavery to exist for so long in a country founded on a fundamental commitment to human freedom and dignity. We remember also that the terrible effects of slavery lingered for decades even after it was officially ended in the United States.

The United States has been enriched by African-American leaders who, by word and example, have sought to cast off the burden of slavery and keep our

country true to its founding principles. Dr. Ralph Bunch, Dr. Martin Luther King and many more strengthened our nation by leading reforms, overcoming obstacles and breaking down barriers. African-Americans now serve at all levels of Government and play an important role in all parts of society. We have made progress, but we have more to do.

Last year was the International Year for People of African Descent, an initiative we supported both at the United Nations and at the Organization of American States. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton described it as an opportunity for all of us around the globe to celebrate the diversity of our societies and to honour the contributions that our fellow citizens of African descent make every day to the economic, social, and political fabrics of our communities.

As part of that effort, the United States is engaging with civil society and host Governments in the Western Hemisphere on a set of programmes aimed at highlighting the contributions made by people of African descent. We continue to work closely with the Governments of Brazil and Colombia on action plans to eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination and promote equality in our respective countries. We are also partnering with Brazil in launching an anti-racism curriculum project at UNESCO.

Finally, we must remember that contemporary forms of slavery exist today. Trafficking in persons is modern-day slavery — women and girls sold, forced or tricked into prostitution; men, women and children labouring in slavery-like conditions; and children stolen and sold and put on the streets as beggars. Through the work of the United States President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, we are seeking to raise public awareness of existing protections and to improve the way that we protect trafficking victims and prosecute human trafficking cases within our borders.

The United States will continue to work in the United Nations and elsewhere to end modern-day slavery, bring traffickers to justice and empower survivors to reclaim their rightful freedom.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Rick Kittles, Scientific Director of African Ancestry, Incorporated, based in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Kittles: I want to thank the General Assembly for the invitation to speak today on the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade — also known in Kiswahili as the "Miafa", or "great tragedy", and, by many descendents of enslaved Africans, as the "the African Holocaust".

The Middle Passage was a stage of the triangular trade in which millions of enslaved Africans, mainly from West, West-Central and Eastern Africa, were shipped to the New World as part of the Atlantic slave trade. Voyages on the Middle Passage were a large financial undertaking, generally organized by companies or groups of investors and, in many cases, countries. European Powers such as Spain, Portugal, France, England, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden took part in the trade, as did traders in the Caribbean, South America and North America. We know that because the forced kidnapping and free labour was a business and, as in most businesses, records were kept, at least during the period when it was legal, up until the mid-1800s. We therefore have much for which to thank the historians, economists, anthropologists, archaeologists and geneticists such as myself who have studied the history and the impact of the transatlantic slave trade across the African diaspora.

I look forward to working with the new generation of scientists and historians who will make advances on what has been done in terms of research so that the millions of descendents of enslaved Africans recognize that their history did not start with slavery in the antebellum South. It is tragic to go to middle schools and high schools and see young African-American children cringing during history class when the slave trade is discussed because many of them believe their history started with slavery.

We therefore have to educate young people and let them know that their history did not start with slavery, but that their ancestors went through the period of slavery. We have to let them know that they are the descendents of proud, productive and purposeful people who resisted and survived the worst holocaust in the history of the world.

It is that history that connects Africans in the diaspora; whether it is the Gullah or Geechee people in the Sea Islands of South Carolina or the Afro-Brazilian, they are all bound by their shared history, just as the Mende rice growers in Sierra Leone or from the upper Guinea coast and the Mbangala from Angola had a common experience when they were shackled and led

along to the coast to forts to wait for ships to take them across the Atlantic on the Middle Passage.

The shackles, the binding and the shared experience are what have brought us here today — the tie that binds. It connects people from one of the greatest continents of our planet — the African continent, which is rich with minerals and resources as well as with cultural and biological diversity. Africa is also the continent where, because of biology and geography, its inhabitants were labelled as inferior and then enslaved.

The tie that binds links shared cultures. Athough the transatlantic slave trade tried to efface traditions and cultures and to stop the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next, remnants of African cultures have survived in the Americas. The shared culture across the diaspora is a beacon alerting the lost descendents to homes unknown.

African-Americans and Africans in the diaspora in the New World have had a unique population history, one that has not been shared by any other group on the planet, one in which there is a loss of family and cultural ties. What binds us therefore in terms of humanity allows us to infer family history and ancestry; by that, I mean DNA — the genetic material in every cell of our bodies, inherited by from our parents — 50 per cent from our mothers, 50 per cent from our fathers. They inherited their DNA from their parents and their grandparents and on and on. That chain, that hierarchy, links us to family, communities and regions on continents. It is because of that DNA, that genetic material, that we pass genes on to our children. Unlike languages, it could not be removed. Unlike cultures and traditions, it could not be lost. That DNA resisted and survived.

When we look at the genetics of African people in the diaspora, we see those of the Mende, Temne, Kru, Capelli, Massa, Mafa, Akan and Kwee peoples. We see the Mandingo and the Wolof in that genetic material because that material has not changed and has not been lost. We are able to do that because of the African genetic diversity. Humankind started in Africa. I do not think that I need to tell participants that. We all know that now. Scientists have proved that humankind started in Africa. Because of that, populations have been in Africa for a very long time — a lot of time for variation to occur in the genetic material. We use that genetic information to seek ancestry for people who have been part of the transatlantic slave trade and who are descendants of that trade.

As I mentioned, Africa is a continent with not only rich natural resources, but also biological resources. That richness calls for survival and resistance in the face of the harsh treatment and racism of the transatlantic slave trade. That variation also provides for the biological diversity and physical features, as well as disease and health. Scientists have suggested that between 15 to 30 per cent of enslaved Africans did not make it across the Atlantic during the Middle Passage. There was a very high mortality rate due to infectious diseases and lack of water, food and nutrients.

We need to explore that because the current state of health among people of African descent in the diaspora is very poor and quite problematic. Health disparities must be a focus at the international level, given its impact among people of African descent in the diaspora. We see common complex diseases, such as type-2 diabetes, asthma, cancer and heart disease, all of which are linked to genes and the environment and should be recognized as matters of social justice alongside issues such as reparations.

I have been blessed to work with a group called African Ancestry, where we use and leverage DNA to trace the ancestry of descendants of enslaved Africans to connect them with their lost homeland. When we provide that service, how the excitement changes the psyche of many African Americans is quite interesting when they realize and find their lost ancestral connection. A friend of mine, an actor and activist named Isaiah Washington, once said that DNA has a memory. That is true. DNA has a memory that led me to the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria in my search to understand and connect with the Hausa people, with whom I share a portion of my genetic ancestry. In the summer of 2000, that was exciting and life-changing for me and for others.

DNA also has a memory such that, in the past two years, it has allowed people of African descent in the diaspora to go to Cameroon with a non-profit group called ArchAmer. They have created ties between African Americans and different ethnic groups in Cameroon, which has created tremendous excitement. Those are examples of where, I believe, we need to go in order to deal with the impact and the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): Slavery is an abomination. It always has been an abomination and, regrettably, in the twenty-first century, it still is.

As an expression of solidarity with all victims of slavery, New Zealand has decided to contribute the sum of $10,000 to the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships — Permanent Memorial. In so doing, we thank the Caribbean Community and Jamaica for bringing the issue before the General Assembly. In addition, the staff of the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations will personally contribute to a collective Mission donation to the Fund. That, too, is an expression of very personal solidarity with all victims of slavery.

The President: I now invite participants to view a performance by the National Ballet of Cameroon.

The members of the General Assembly watched a dance performance.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of agenda item 119?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.